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NO. 21

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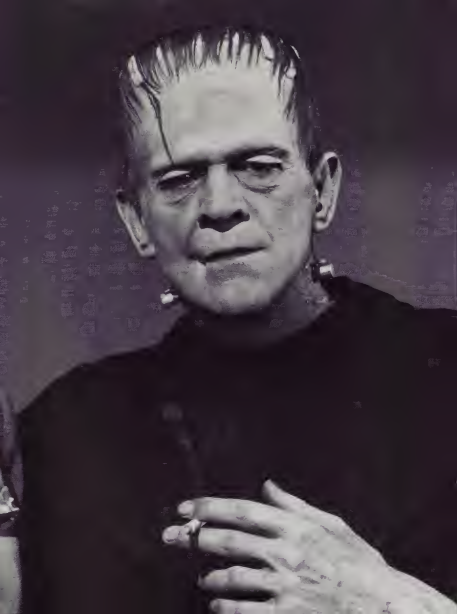
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This issue dedicated to Tom Weaver, a first-rate historian, writer and researcher.

Special Thanks To:

Ray Dennis Steckler, Jim Singer, Karl Theede, Ted Okuda, Ralph Schiller, Alex McGregor, Scott Alexander, Larry Kussow, Kathy Duba, Tom Weaver, Fred Allen Ray, Eric Caiden, Katherine Ormsen, Jimmy Roane, Michael F. Blake, Ed & Caroline Pham, John & Isabelle Noira, Lee Harris, Jena Wells, Sara Karloff, Brandon Ortiz, Forrest J. Ackerman, Jan Henderson, Greg Menk, Ed Louvarian, Ren Boast, Bob Madison, Frank Dello Stritto and Titus Moody

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Cult Movies

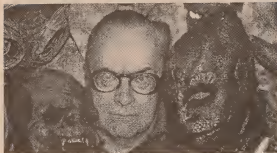
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**From
Hollywood,
USA, where
the movies
are made!!!!!!**

Inside front cover candid of Boris Karloff from Route 66.

Cult Movies After Dark



by Michael Copner, Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to issue 21 of the publication that aims to satisfy all your cult movie needs. Our critics may claim we have too much Lugosi, too much sex, too much Godzilla, or too much Ed Wood. But our fans tell us our taste is simply too much!

Six months ago we were happy to release a 50/50 issue, turning over half our magazine to Forrest J Ackerman, the Godfather of Sci-Fi, for a test revival of his classic *Spacemen* magazine from the 1960's. Most of our readers jumped for joy when they saw this wild, novel addition to our regular menu of delights.

But a few rumors circulated that we had been disgruntled with Uncle Forry for several explicit seasons. I heard the same basic story repeated often enough that it was evident someone was telling tales. The fact that we're doing another *Spacemen* should put those tales to rest.

For the record, let it be said that Ackerman the Great is the greatest. Always has been, always will

be. Sci-fi, horror film fandom wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Forrest J Ackerman. And Forry at 80 is still as enthused and vitally involved in the genre now as ever. We're happy, proud, honored and privileged to be working with the founding father of Monster Fandom. We had no disagreement with him about anything. We love him and hope to work with him on many publishing projects in the very near future.

The other pressing matter is our super-fortunate discovery of Bill Chancellor, our latest cover artist. A computer graphics wizard based in Texas, Bill was one more of Forry's fans in the glory days of *Famous Monsters* magazine and always wanted to create cover art for something similar. We're delighted to present his debut work, a moody, shadowy rendering of Glenn Strange as the Frankenstein Monster. "I hope your readers like my stuff," Bill told us when presenting this spooky and intricate work. "I want to become the Basil Gogos of *Cult Movies* magazine!"

We're sure our readers will approve. Watch for his surprise creation on our next cover!

But that's enough of a prelude. We've got wonderful stuff this issue so — on with the show! ■



Letters

I very much enjoyed your recent double issue of *Cult Movies* and *Spacemen*. As always you have done a fine job of looking at the films that tend to get overlooked. Forrest J Ackerman was the first to see that these films were in need of a magazine to take their side, so he gave us *Famous Monsters*. I've been a fan since the start.

Also—in your interview with Kay Parker you did not go into her work in England under the name Kay Taylor, such as the horror film *Night Nurse*. This is something that should have been covered.

James Killian
Simsion, AL

Thanks for *Cult Movies* #20. The only issue I'd seen earlier was the "Speeding Bullet" issue, the most compelling story of George Reeves' life and death ever written.

Some items in #20 need correction. Bryan Sinn harps on Willis O'Brien's excellent animation in *The Black Scorpion*. Obie didn't do any animation for that picture. It was all done by Pete Peterson from a wheelchair in his *Roseda* workshop. Per details, see my story in *SPFX* #4.

William Cappa's spread on the unsold *Monsieur Cooper* project was just one of many *Cooper-O'Brien* projects aborted at MGM. The hero "mourned on the back of a giant falcon" suggests it was *War Eagles* which started in 1938. Another was *Paradise Lost*. For this, Marcel Delgado built some winged angels. Obie animated them as a test. *Paradise* was scrapped as being unworkable. I knew the cameraman, Bert Willis, who recalled the angels as being hopelessly pigeon-toed. Cooper also planned a *Fantasia*-like film at MGM using classical music, but a never materialized. My forthcoming book *The Making of Mighty Ray Young*, overseen by Ray Harryhausen will explicate many of Cooper's aborted productions at MGM and RKO.

Cappa confused the "\$100,000 machine big as an automobile" with the traveling movie process I believe he was describing MGM's early motion control device which allowed pans and tilts on live action to be replicated on matte paintings and structures. Both elements were tied together with a traveling split-screen line, resulting in seamless movement from one to the other.

New Yorkers who grew up with *Pittus TV* might remember the many guest appearances Moe Howard made on *Clabbease Gang* with *Officer Joe Belton*, the *WPIX* outlet for the *Stogies* comedies.

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Moe often demonstrated his "fingers in the eye" schtick and warned kids not to try it at home, or anywhere else for that matter. Joe DeRita used to pop in with Moe to *Hyge Haze Rocket*, Will Turrent. Those were the days.

Buddy Barnett and all Ed Wood fans might be interested in the complete story behind the music used in *Plan 9 from Outer Space* published recently in *Scarier Street #23*. The entire *Plan 9* background music package on CD, digitally remastered from the original library tracks, is available from Retroscopic Records, POB 30666, Brooklyn, NY 11230. The CD is \$16.95 plus \$3 p&h.

Keep up the good work. A good mix of cinema obscure and engaging stories of personalities like Ilona Massey makes for pleasurable reading.

Paul Mandel
New York, NY

Congratulations on a unique and superb magazine. Your coverage of all things weird is second to none!

I'm writing this letter for two reasons—the first is to address a question one of your readers had a few issues back. He inquired on the whereabouts of Jill Buerger (sister of Spaul Yerby). I was speaking to Johnny Legend at a convention and he said he heard she was killed in a motorcycle accident in the early 1980s. She was also enjoyable in several episodes of *Dragnet*, so I was sorry to hear the belated news.

Also, your coverage of cult directors has been great, but you've left a very important one out. The creator of *Psycho* is Lee (1988) and *Calisto Gygis* (1987), Carmine Capovian to have been overlooked!

I'm a big fan of both these films and I'm curious to see how *Mr. Capovian* — and customers such as Debs Thibault or Frank Stewart — are doing today. Has he made more than those two movies? If anyone out there has information on this, please write to this magazine!

Tom O'Neill
Waldwick, NJ

Movies often address the dark side of humanity. Two that deliver a solid punch to the gut are *Easy Rider* (1969) and *A Perfect World* (1993). In *Easy Rider* two young men set out to discover themselves and America. Their hair is long, they flirt with the wrong side of the law, and one of them has an abrasive personality; qualities that, to the minds of a couple of good ol' southern rednecks equate to a death sentence. In *A Perfect World* it's a cop that acts a judge, jury and executioner.

These movies are deeply depressing. The attitude that "I've known what's best" for you/society/mandand is a disturbing one. Yet, it's rampant. It's not uncommon for some group (often church affiliated) or individual (e.g. Bob Dole) to denounce a film (e.g. Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*), book (e.g. Salman Rushdie's *Satanstoe Versus*), or whatever, as morally/socially corrupt. And it seems, that all too often, those doing the condemning have little understanding of that which offends them.

There are a number of things that makes *Cult Movies* and the films you write about fascinating. Among these is the implied acceptance of those whose vision, interests, or talents varies widely from the mainstream and/or from our own ideals. And so, it was with some dismay that I read the



letter from Joe Whiting in issue 19. He asks that you "leave the porn coverage to less deserving mags" is this any different than asking that you "leave the _____ coverage to less deserving mags"? (What goes in the blank — Ed Wood, John Wayne, Godzilla, horror, westerns, John Waters, sci-fi, ad nauseum?)

My interest in movies is very broad and ranges across most of the genres and eras. I read *Cult Movies* cover to cover. I find each article to be fascinating — sometimes because of the topic, sometimes because of the author's own intense interest in the topic. Tim Moody's interview of Kay Parker (too short) was no less compelling than Strzmo's extensive article on the life and films of Menon Cooper.

Porn's content, goal and typical budgets are a recipe for bad movies. Still, there are porn films, writers, performers, and directors that rise above the glut of "fast buck" movies. *Cafe Flesh* (Pat Stearns, aka Michelle Brant) is as good a post-apocalyptic movie as I've seen. Few movies spent less money on sets and had lower production values (boom makes and crew shadows appear several times) than *Fewer Fools* (Janey Robbins); still there is no denying the mystique that pervades the film. The Nina Hartley films (*Debbie Das Dukes* and *Rising Mefresses*) are, in an outrageous way, very funny.

Please continue the broad, open-minded coverage of film — there is no more deserving magazine. And of course, Joe Whiting has the solution within his letter, skip the articles "[Y]ou really don't care to read..."

Jeff Kerschner
Marblemount, WA

A friend and fellow Harry Langdon fan sent me a copy of your magazine with Rudy Minger's article on Langdon. It's just great — my compliments to Mr. Minger on a fine, insightful piece. After so many years of outrageous errors and self-serving falsehoods from other commentators, this was a breath of fresh air. Perhaps your readers would be interested in our Harry Langdon society?

Floyd Bennett
PO Box 368
Downers Grove, IL 60535
e-mail: harry_181@netnet.com

(Indeed they should be! Fans of Langdon are encouraged to contact Mr. Bennett for more information about the club, newsletter, and activities of the Harry Langdon Society.)

The fanzines of Lagon, Chaney, and Karloff want to thank all of you who helped us with our stamp effort. Without the support and help from thousands and thousands of people all over the country, we could never have been successful. We received thousands of wonderful letters ourselves from people who had seen and enjoyed these

actors' films. Hundreds of others wrote directly to the Post Office in Washington. With your help some 15,000 signatures were gathered for us by fans from far and near. It was a most gratifying experience for us all.

As most of you know, on October 31 the Post Office announced its selection and unveiled the stamp set at Universal Studios Florida. There will be a set of five stamps honoring these men for their unique contributions to cinema history.

It is our understanding that the stamps will be issued in early October '97 at Universal Studios California. It will be a precious moment for each of the families, and one we gladly share with you, these fans of the Legends of Horror.

One last note of thanks should go to the U. S. Post Office. From the start they have been marvelous to work with. They have been both courteous and considerate of the families, and have kept us well informed throughout the entire process.

Thank you all once again.

Gratefully,
Sara Karloff

Thanks for the story on *Barbarella* in your *Spaceview* magazine. You might want to do a follow-up with *Star Crash* featuring Caroline Munro as the thigh-high-boot-wearing heroine in outer space. Since the retro look is in, maybe we can see a review of the lost classic, *Girl in Gold Boots* with Leslie McLean. There are many of us out here with a love for that look.

John Klematis
c/o B.O.O.T.S
PO Box 1322
Tijeras, NM 87059

I truly dig your *Spaceview* flip issue with Forrest J. Ackerman. With all the currently available sci-fi magazines being full of drivel, I think it's a perfect fit for *Cult Movies* with Forrest's emphasis on those great past films from Metropolis to the '50s Golden Age. Please keep this new feature, as it makes your very cool publication even better.

Billy Cox
Spring, TX

**Got something to say?
Write to:**

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MOVIE & VIDEO REVIEWS



Fireball Jungle

(American, 1960) With Lee Remick, Jr., Alisa Moon, John "Lawrence" Russell, Randy Kirby, Nancy Donahue and Herman the Wonder Dog. Written by Harry Whittington. Directed by Joseph Mawra. Color, 94 minutes and available from Something Weird Video.

Between stunts with Al Adams and bit parts in A.C. Lyles' gonzo-westerns, Chazley's Younger put in an appearance in this failed stock-car story, ground out by gibbering heads for the Southern drive-in circuit. Genre writers generally count his performance as yet another step in the actor's degradation from the Valhalla of Universal's backlist to a generalized poverty Ragin' G, announcing its vacuousness and exploitation. They like that sort of thing and such morales should be understood, if not entirely forgiven. Chazley, Jr., is still widely regarded as a second-order who rode his father's name to episodic glory in the genre's so-called "Second Golden Age" of the fifties. His later career, yet another casualty of the collapse of the studio system, is often read as the saddest-true visible consequence of prostitution and a flawed nature. Middle-class morality demands the sort of story from time to time and blather writers obligingly do it up, using the "love" of Judy Garland, Montgomery Clift, Errol Flynn, and (yes) Bela Lugosi and the Chazley in the way program used to smother the racist taste of a very old crotch.

Not even a fanatic could make a case for *Fireball Jungle* and not even I will try. The narrative concerns itself with the exploits of one Ronald "Gokey" Moon, stock-car driver, racer, and all-around shillabid. Alisa Moon as Gokey's is a ripe Melvillian over-the-top of the Tammy Faye school, giving the sort of eye-rolling, screams-picking, near-psychotic performance the late movie perfected in *Blaze* like *The Killing* and *The World's Greatest Sinner*. You simply can't take your eyes off her and part of the charm of this film is the latent expectation that the poor soul is about to be gently backed out-of-office and into an ambulance for his own good. Now it is that the only delight of *Fireball Jungle*. The expansion is choppy and fragmented as an odd delirium and the eye is kept gently amused with a great deal of badly acted violence. There is no plot as such. The characters would remind you of people you saw in other movies if not for the fact they are all different. The whole experience beggars description. John "Lawrence" Russell is a gangster with a penitentiary monochrome (the Boston Blackout kind) and there is lots of stock-footage and technical misbehavior. You won't soon forget a verbal that goes past beer and a sub-register that flashes money.

Lee (and Herman, the Wonder Dog) has an auto gonzo-like heavily patterned by the local "epitaphs." Since this is a film in which the characters declare their innocent thoughts and desires, Chazley gets to discharge a lot of loose dialogue ("This could be good junkyard") and may once brooding, Larry Talbot stunts. Deep in schlocky and expertly ripping take off



Lee Remick, Jr.

Old Milwaukee, the old fellow grew this wonderfully belly flack it's only moments of dignity. Lee Remick in *Trilogy of the Moon* and *Korloff in Target*, Chazley seems to know that his time is almost over and so attempts to give one more film a brutal honesty of actor's truth. When, down with the bikers, he declares, "I can't get going to go, but I'm scared to die," we don't see a pathetic Hollywood drunkard, but an excellent and semi-ambitious actor with the sad, only choice he'll ever have at playing King Lear. People who've seen *Spider Baby* or *High Noon* will understand and those who only remember *The Indestructible Man* or *The Howling Furies* won't know what the hell I'm talking about.

This is another in the "Johnny Legend's Untamed Video" series and has some of the better actors we're used to expect from Something Weird, including the notable company trader. The video transfer is quite good (as usual) and the print itself looks most deceptively bettered as it had been beaten with a length of chain and then submerged in booze. As we all know, this only heightens the experience.

Reviewed by Randall Duke Gorman

The Phynx

(Warner Brothers/Green Arts, 1970) With Al Michael Miller, Ray Chappoway, Donna Lardner, Luanne Stevens, Lou Antonio, Michael Ansara and numerous guest stars and extras. Written by Sam Corney. Directed by Lee H. Katzev. Color, 83 minutes and available from Video Star of Miami.

When, according to Variety, the Kinney Corporation "acquired" (Gorey verb) Warner Brothers/Green Arts, the corporate might was stark with as much as \$50,166,000 of available cinematic product ignoring any in the studio's vaults. One can imagine the Kinney execs, emerging glass-eyed and dazed from the latest multiple screening, only to contemplate the

concurrent projects of *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, 2000 Years Later, *The Last of the Mohike* Hot Shot, *Trop*, *The Big Balance*, *The Valley of Guano*, *Jerry Lewis' Which Way To The Front?*, and *Luchina Vancetti's The Diamond* and the consequent evacuation of their covers. Thoughts of box shippers and write-offs undeniably frugged through their heads, along with the sort of marketing schemes traditionally hatched when the writer of flap event brings in the headlines. The company actually lost \$17 million in 1970, despite the runaway success of *M*A*S*H* and *Buck Comedy* and the *Shandones Kid* like all their other in-house properties. The Phynx was no help.

Advertised as a film with "nothing left out" (and rated GFI), *The Phynx* takes a leaf from the Dan Kaminetz Monkeys playbook and chronicles the imperishable rise of a genetically-rick-and-roll head. Seen the Monkeys had already sent themselves up, briefly, in *Head* (1968), the potential for meaningful story had diminished, grossly. Proud (from their story) by Bob Becker and George Papp (whose hit *outlets* by *The First Family* partly inspired the *Go to the Sun* and directed by one and future TV-comeback back Lee H. Katzev (whose *Whisper* *Happened To Aunt Alice?* (1962) demonstrated his Boppy Stone-Gorey way with loud cleave-up and out-to-grass comicisms), the film first came to my attention from a reference book I'd owned in the '70s, scarily titled *Who Was Who On Screen*. The only criteria for inclusion in this thick and fascinating volume were a film appearance and a death certificate. *The Phynx* was the last credit in so many entries that it seemed (what else?) *unintentional* Michael Wildon. On the first volume of his available *Psychiatric Encyclopedia of Film* reach off the impressive list of guests and upon the reader to "write your best TV station or reveal their" if your appetite is thus whetted, and more was.

The "most important American leaders" On un-likely ground of '30s screen personalities are led-up by Albin (1) in order to lower American morale and facilitate German victory. The government predictably passes and refers the whole sticky matter to a computer shaped like a woman and named M O T H A (Mechanical Oracle That Helps American) M O T H A (advice (as a punch card that emerges from her vagina) that the government form a rock band named *The Phynx*), manager the *Billboard* album charts, and thus mark an introduction to Albin's and director (Michael Ansara) *Madness* against taking the appropriate quarter as athletes, a disgruntled intellectual, an African American actor, and an Indian militant (played by four very plastic and subsequently obscure actors) at the bottom of a barely less-than-*Clash* *Shandones* (including his *Nixon* schtick). The boys are threatened with the draft, taught their instruments and put through their military and counterintelligence by Clint Walker (who bows himself off), Harold "Geddy" Brooks and Richard Pryor. The government makes a back role of their absent (initial) king Luanne Platter-style tone of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller) by shooting up the rest of the stack at local record stores.

Before we can effectively ponder the obvious parallels between this plot development and our military policy in Vietnam, the action is whisked to several stock-footage European locales. Scene out *Mist* Helen actors follow, swirling x-ray glasses and a few-part song initiated to the bellies of Italian models. Our kids eventually arrive in Albania to perform for the exiled Tuscan-born royalty. Johnny Weissmuller, Pat O'Brien (who gets to be a funny Reagan pole), Busby Berkeley, Butterfly McQueen, Rudy Vallee, Edgar Bergen (teach with Charlie McCarthy and bebop legend), Cal Harlan (and GFI), Andy Devine, the *Three-Five* George Jessel, Dorothy Lamour, Les Gorey and Monte Hall (showing some brief, *Heidi* *He* to *Ship* and *Sebel*), *Joe Silverhead*, and *Joe Louis* (among others) are trotted out like elderly, bejeweled circus horses on their way to the glit factory. They are most to stand

as the nation's collective fantasy-life share their stories as "leaders" — living expressions of all that is true and good in the American Way of Life. Actually, most of them seem distracted, confused, and on hand for last-psychoed. *Blush* (aka *Who's the Man?*) comes up with an escape plan, and the *Phyx* tear down the Alamo wall in a wildly feature-cry of pain, crumbled sack showmanship. Imagine the Cowells at the Hollywood Bowl.

Two recent *Kenny* realizations: the transparency of hopelessness of selling *The Phyx* to even an audience started with *Laugh In*, *Get Smart*, and *Vaseline*, saw to it that the film was barely released. Variety called it "an inept, satirical comedy," even while praising the effects work. *Movie Palace Daily* thought it an exercise in "bad taste," despite all the energy expended and *The Hollywood Reporter*, with an apologetic eye on the health of the industry, mentioned the squandered of "manny no one owns and will ever see again in eyes one-generation." And as the film vanished down the memory-hole of failed commerce and was duly written off by a studio whose next temporary salvation lay in the release of *Pattino* a few months later.

The Phyx, friends, is a bona-fide cult classic. It is bad in ways undreamed by Ed Wood, Jess Franco, or even Hal Needham. *Jesus Lily* saw this film with me, pronounced it worse than even *Dracula Vs Frankenstein* but laughed all the way through. Nothing could better suit an irony-drenched '80s audience than this cynical major-studio attempt at surreal cultural sitcom. It would defy the best (and never very good) parody efforts of the MST 3000 crowd. I reiterate: Michael Walden — write the best reversal house or (semi-) independent TV station and put this film before an audience. And be prepared to accept the consequences.

— Reviewed by Ronald Dale Gorman

The Demolitionist

(1994, A-Pix Film) This stars Nicole Eggert, who looks damn good in leather, and Richard Gere, who plays a pretty crumb villain named "Mad Dog." This Bob Kurtzman (of theashing effects from KNB) directed zombie-as-superhero endeavor comes off like a better produced version of *Legion Of The Night*. But forget about the stupid, predictable story — it's worth checking simply to see the B-movie actor roster — Reggie Banzon, Bruce Abbott, Susan Tyrrell, Berni Douglas, Jack Nance, Tim Savat, Heather Langenkamp, and Bruce Campbell!

Reviewed by Kevin Lindemuth

The Addiction

(1985, Dir Abel Ferrara) New York philosophy student Lili Taylor is bitten by vampires *Anastasia* Scorcia, drinks blood and sports pretentiousness for the better half of the film. Being out the last quarter of the movie where all the vampires she has needed slaughter her graduation party guests, in a most movie-like fashion. This marriage still doesn't reflect the movie, though.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindemuth

Evil Ambitions

(1996, B+ Productions) A satirical public relations firm lures young models to the sacrificial altar of happiness and the devil. A *cosplay* register by the name of McQueen, intends to dig up some dirt on the governor (who is one of the cult members) to make them open their plan for world domination... and were really cool special effects. This is a fun movie, one of the best *Night Stalker* episodes that was never made, with special appearances by Bill Henson and Debbie Rochon.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindemuth

Vamps: Deadly Dreamgirls

(1986, B+ Productions) No, not a sequel to the *Grave*



Frances York of *The Doll Squad*

Jesus movie but it might as well be. Female vampires, plotting to strangle, entice men to their doom. A young woman, down on her luck, joins the "Vamps" club, not knowing that she'll soon become one of the undead. To complicate things even more she falls in love with a priest, who is in a cross of faith. Although it is slightly predictable, the scenario of the movie makes it all worthwhile.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindemuth

Voodoo Down

(1990, Dir by Steven Paulberg, Prod by Steven Minkler, Screenplay by John Russo, Jeffrey DeLoach, Thomas Rodden, Evan Dowsky, With Raymond S. Jacques, Thomas Morris, Gena Gershon, Kirk Baily, Billy "Sly" Williams, Tony Todd.

Though possessing a few beautiful settings (moss-covered, green leafy forest) and touching (drily) on the banquette theme of the night of the married first voodoo, the film falls into the same trap that scares away a low-budget, direct-to-video effort: poor characterization and leaden plotting. John Russo (of *Night Of The Living Dead* fame) and his three co-writers cannot tell a tale of big city college life caught up in a struggle between immigrant farm workers from Haiti and an evil voodoo priest named Malboro. For some inexplicable reason, that racist sewer is sucking and killing his former countrymen in order to

obtain body parts to assemble a patrician zombie creation. Why this voodoo version of Dr. Frankenstein does all this is never explained the already has a handful of whole human corpses to do his bidding, nor is much else in this poorly-scripted and dully shot movie (has Rosen pinned anything good since 1968?)

For Tony Todd (who made such an impression in the 1990 *Night Of The Living Dead* remake) and the Candyman (same) has no dialogue as the voodoo villain and little to do except creep about in the dark with a machete. The only intriguing moments in this waste-of-time arise when the friendly man he effectively uses a wooden doll to make Malboro twist and jerk the way that that — and the final shot of one of the zombies (who, in leading significant makeup, simply look like slow-walking field workers) having been run through midways with an iron bar, the penetrating corpse can't get through the door because the ends of the bar jutting out from either side of his body keep catching on the door frame and the madhouse organism simply bungs again and again at the portal. Sadly, one late joke at a zombie's expense and a few pretty images do not an entertaining movie make, and viewers should simply lay over and go back to sleep rather than face this Voodoo Dross.

Reviewed by Bryan Sean

Girl in Trouble

(Dir by Brandon Chase, starring Tommy Clarke, Ray Menard, Something Weird Video)

A hard former's daughter sets out for the glimmerous life — and New Orleans is where she's going to let it all hang out. On her journey to the city she has an accident, twists her ankle and is helped out by a handsome man. Unbeknownst to her the guy is actually a perverted freak who wants payment for his kindness. A fight breaks out and she breaks his head in with a rock, steals his car and splits to New Orleans.

As fate would have it, she ends up in a boarding house run by an old, lead-mouthed old who sets the girl up with all sorts of delicious jobs, and with each job she finds herself in more trouble than before. With close and a great figure, what was a girl in trouble to do? Stop!

Tommy Clarke in the lead is perfect as the naive wif. You'll also love Naomi Saitchik as the old shut with a potential to really come up. Although the strip scene scene is in the camp arena, with no hoops or blends this movie turned out to be plenty of fun.

Reviewed by John Tolosano

The Doll Squad

(Prod. & Dir by Todd V. Mikole, with Michael Aronov, Frances York, Turn Robots)

This goes starts off dull, but when the action starts it's like a roller coaster ride! A major government project has been altered by an unknown being. So, enter the Doll Squad, the most effective looking women, with sexy wigs, make-up and far-out clothes. They're everything the 1970s had to offer! Experienced in guerrilla warfare and martial arts with more tricks than James Bond, the girls set out to rob the ruthless sex villain. In-between the scenes are psychedelic visuals that look like a mad trip. The movie sounds like something out of *Charlie's Angels*, and the acting is way-out fun to watch.

Reviewed by John Tolosano

Sex-O-Phrenia

(1970, 88 min. With Rene Band, Keith Erickson)

Lovely loveless in need of education has become freemason that cause her to seek out random sex acts. Good looking Californian, soft-core product, shot in 16mm, was a fun way to kill an hour in the nation's grand houses, and it's still cool in 1997. Rene Band carries the full burden of inappropriate adult thriller, (continued)

and she's got the body, generosity, and acting talent to sweet the task. There's a variable rock-n-roll-inspired musical score which breezes through an sex encounter after another, right up to the ambiguous, abrupt conclusion.

Most exploitation films tend to be glorified B-movie movies, and in the 1970s they were much more glorified than the video trash of today. For a trip back in time, see this odd but good, available on VHS from Alpha Blue Archives of Oakland, California.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

Saddle Tramp Women

(1972, Prod. & Dir. by Geoffrey Daniels, Written by Dan Edwards, With Carl DeLong, John Alderman, Bear Sead, Heather Vale, Candy Samples, Sandy Deagney, Cele, 65 min.)

Beauty hunters clash with outlaws who gang rape the daughter of a cattle rancher. This is a top-notch stuff with superb acting and the most gory, suspenseful wild-west-as-a-gash-for-the John Ford western. This undoubtedly played the drive-ins, but also displays enough life 'n' wit and soft-core sensuality to have been shown in the nation's grand houses — just before Linda Lovelace appeared on the scene and changed the rules of the exploitation game completely.

Rare, steady, and Candy each portray lookers in a lovely frontier town. Miss Bear Sead gets a chance to do some rock acting and proves she's up to the task. Part-time sex video, and *Saddle Tramp Women* profit. Available from Alpha Blue Archives, PO Box 10772, Oakland, CA 94630. Ph/Fax: 510-888-0813.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

The Last Step Down

(1970, an A.P.E. Production. With Melba and Usha Deyant)

"What are you into? What's your scene?" A young swinger is talking to an innocent girl who sits shyly watching something that could ignite into a hot lesbian encounter.

"Oh, you know," the shy one replies. "Girl from a small town, new to the big city." It doesn't take her long to learn her way around. There are girl-girl frolics around the swimming pool. In a church, monks play booty young ladies dance and perform orgasmic rituals at the altar. This is 1970, so it's all soft-core, but the unbridled Theda Deyant is spectacular as always, with her huge, plump, fat, giant-squid breasts that nearly everyone in this movie gets a chance to play with.

These days out of film, it has rarities and spleen, but that isn't really much of a detriment. It gives the film got lots of lookers, and you can more easily stomach yourself watching that at the Paragon, or the World, or the No-Frills back in the dim-and-70s. Available from Alpha Blue Archives of Oakland, California.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

Ladies Grove Excitement

(1935, Dir. by Nick Grady, With Norman Foster, Esther Ralston, Mabel Pannone)

A bored little rich girl (who plays her own exogynous in her spare time) hooks up romantically with a somewhat photogenic and becomes enraptured in grassy fields, a chock-out, cruise at the racetrack, and a countless car chase. This may be the most action-packed feature Mr. Levine ever cranked out for his Mosaic Pictures. Part of the fun is the where-were-they-they aspect of it all. Also, Richard appears in the supporting cast. Joseph H. Lewis is credited as Supervising Editor, six years before his directorial debut on Marmagora's *Lugosi's Ark*, *Invisible Ghost*. A wham-bang credit sequence and the behind the scenes look at what is filmmaking here! This has four-star rating for all B-movie fans.

Senator Cramer has just released this from a beautiful, crisp 16mm print.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

Flower and Snake

(1974, Dir. by Masaru Kowada, with Mikiyo Tani, Yashiko Inaba)

A young man is asked by his employer to sexually seduce his frigid wife. An amazing procession of footage and surreal scenes follow, and a tale is told in flashback form.

Rarely is there a counterpart to this type of film produced in the United States — a superbly written and directed and masterfully acted studio film devoted to sex. Likewise there is no American counterpart to Nikkatsu Studios, the Japanese company which produced dozens of these films in the 1970s. Paced with financial difficulties, Nikkatsu gave itself over entirely to sex-themed films, specializing in the Roman-porn epics devoted to the punishment and humiliation of the female, usually with the framework of emotional dramatic stories.

Whereas the European filmmakers played blood and guts brutality in their 8&M films, the Japanese brand beauty in these same themes. And of course, they taught but never actually showed genital penetration scenes, something that would have been mandatory in American adult films by the mid-1970s. And even in Japan, this specialized genre died out with the eventual advent of home video and explicit hardcore sex.

So here is this film from 20 years out of the past, made by a director and cast at the peak of their creative powers. A distinctive sexual film of the personal, subliminal of a man and a woman, both tripped by circumstance, and both in the break of new women. And yeah, *Flower and Snake* spends a lot of time tied in bed, suspended from the rafters, tormented with feathers, and made to endure some hot and spicy goe spread on her helpless, played-wide womanhood in one especially alarming scene.

This film is available in its original letterboxed format from Video Search of Miami, PO Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116, phone (305) 279-9773.

Sitar of David: Beauty Hunting

(1973, Dir. by Naruharu Suzuki, with Natsuko Yatsushiro)

In this Roman-porn saga from Japan, a young man turns his lustiest into a torture chamber and keeps a variety of beautiful women caged for torment. This is more of a psychological drama than many in the genre, and the violence is more minutely blended into the telling of the tale of a family history. Director Suzuki is better known for his *Samurai* and *Samurai* action films, but most critics have been at home with the subject matter. Video Search of Miami has a letterboxed, color, English subtitled print of this film.

Tokyo Emanuelle

(1975, Dir. Akira Kato, with Kikumi Togeuchi)

A questionable mid-70s centerfold girl comes to life on film. The film is the made-for-cover one as Kato goes into her days away, from Paris to Tokyo, seeking more men to get naked with. It's glib, soft, mindless erotic fun from Nikkatsu Studios of Japan, produced in an expensive style contemporary with similar American-made adult prints for the theaters. A letterboxed German language print with English subtitles is available from Video Search of Miami, PO Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

Wife To Be Sacrificed

(1914, Dir. by Masaru Kowada, with Mikiyo Tani, Yashiko Inaba)

A beautiful young woman charges her husband with sexual battery. The man escapes from the police and remains in hiding for three years. Breeding with lust for revenge, he kidnaps the woman wife of a change her to an abandoned house in the countryside where he

subject her to a shocking punishment before conducting a re-marriage ceremony — now she's coerced, submissive, and in bed with him.

The Japanese "Queen of 8&M," Mikiyo Tani is absolutely delicious in her bondage. Having played the same character type so often, the once-omnipotent in a *Shanghai Weekly* interview that these films had permanently changed the shape of her because. In this film, she spends almost her entire screen time in ropes and some manner of distress. An artfully directed "pink" classic from the famous Nikkatsu Studios of Japan, in a beautiful, flawless, letterboxed, English subtitled print. Available from Video Search of Miami, PO Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116, phone (305) 279-9773.

Reviewed by Michael Capper

Vengeance of Ursus

(1962, Dir. by Luigi Caporina, with Season Burke and Wendell Gault. From Janis Films and DePinto Studios. Released in America by Melodrama Pictures in 1963.)

The mighty Ursus protects a princess who is traveling through a hostile country. After many perils and trials, Ursus and his long-time by surviving the journey. The ultra-rare, seldom seen film is not often available in lots of forward and send-off. The film at Senator Cramer has located a television print — a bit spiffy for a minute or two, but in beautiful, brilliant color. Muscular Burke is put through many tests of strength and there's an outstanding element of treachery and double-crossing by the royalty in this one. Highly recommended. From Senator Cramer's, PO Box 6389, Medford, OR 97501. Phone 541-775-8880.

Raising Heroes

(1965, Written & Directed by Douglas Leary, with Troy Seawell, Henry White)

Two politicians become entangled in a gay couple gets targeted by small-time gangsters after being accidental witnesses to a mob hit. The film starts loosely, leads to a bloody showdown for a grand finish.

"There has never been a gay action hero in film, as anywhere else for that matter," my twenty-three-year-old writer-producer-director-editor, Douglas Leary. "The whole idea of a masculine gay male is completely removed from American society. I think it's sort of time for a positive gay role made in film." Principal photography for this film began September, 1964 in New York City, with additional filming taking place in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The film is now complete and available for theatrical distribution.

Phonies Cinema, an enterprising young company with a reputation for distributing exceptional indie product, has picked this one up for American release. The company has a large portfolio of unique films available for both the street and non-theatrical screenings. Booking inquiries should be directed to Gregory Hatanaka, Phone (310) 478-3308, FAX (310) 478-0206.

The Slave

(1962, Dir. by Sergio Corbucci, Starring Steve Reeves, Jacques Sernas, Gianni Maria Cassa, Claudio Gora. Also known as *The Son of Spartacus*.)

By 1962 the mass-appeal film had begun slipping in quality, one adventure after another with the same difference being that the budget slipped lower each time. However, *Steve Reeves* was still strong enough box office to warrant turning out Jewish movies that show the actor off at his best. At times coming off like a Hercules movie crossed with a Zorro film, this particular story concerns itself with Reeves, the son of the rebel slave Spartacus. Reeves of course plays Spartacus who is sent by Caesar to work for, and eventually join, on, Crassus. Falling in love with a slave girl helps bring the plight of the slave to his attention, plus finding out that he's the son of Spartacus helps in this direction, as



Steve Kozes (center) in *The Slave*

well.

These films often stretch the limits of plausibility in the breaking point, but this little vignette in *Randall's* past does seem a lot too big a secret never to have come

up before. I mean, *Randall* wears his father's pendant around his neck but he has no idea what it is, where it comes from or why he has it, but he has had it since childhood. Casner sees the pendant, knows it's the

same type that Spartacus wore, but never makes the connection with *Randall*. Then Casner sends *Randall* off to spy on the man who killed his father, though no one knows that yet, whereas he runs into the one man in *Earth* who can make the first connection between the pendant, *Randall*, and *Spartacus*. Missing *any* detail is one thing, but this just goes a bit far.

Using his father's helmet and sword, *Randall* leads Casner's men at night while pretending to help during the day. During each attack he leaves an "S" marked on someone as his symbol, hence the *Spartacus* reference. Eventually *Randall* is captured but freed by the slaves who take time out to kill Casner by pouring molten gold on his face, which we get to see in a great POV shot. In the end, Casner shows up, sentences *Randall* to be crucified only to have the freed slaves step him, then he goes home. *Randall* returns his father's sword to his grave sight and hints to a sequel.

Every one of these fight scenes is impressive. Throughout the entire movie, while it's supposed to be *Randall* in the helmet, I don't think the actor is *Randall*. So many of these actor's builds can be used like fingerprints in moments when you can't see the face, and *Randall* surely has a more distinctive cut than any of his contemporaries. In the earlier scenes when he's in the helmet, you can clearly see the square cut, low hanging paws that *Randall* never lost even when he cut down on his work outs. Just before *Randall* takes his men to save a town about to be burned, there's a change in the chest. Suddenly the paws are much smaller, ride higher on his chest and have a roundness to them. *Randall* never got. This might have been done on a second suit type of

(continued)



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Eric Caidin, our founding father.

situation, giving Reeves time to film scenes where his face was definitely needed.

Jaqueline Secora gave a rasee supporting role as Rando's former love friend Berta, seen with his blond hair pulled back into a tightly braided pony tail. Secora plays Berta as the love interest in the film, but her death scene was not in the film. She returns the favor by bringing him his sword to help free him when he's been captured.

It has been suggested that this was an official sequel to Kirk Douglas' *Spartacus*, but it seems only to have added to the film's value. Different writers, producers, director, production and releasing companies using the same public domain character. There we have a bigger budget and better sets than most Italian epics, but this film proved once again that it was Reeves who brought the people into the theatre, not a spectacle that just happened to star him.

Reviewed by Stephen Flossman

The Perfume of the Lady in Black

(1974, Italy Original Language Title *La Profuma Della Donna in Nero*)

As one might suspect from its *selezionata* title (its lowest translation of its original Italian title), this European thriller never found American distribution and has only recently made it to American shores on video. One part goes, two parts stylish pulp, and three parts *Requiem*, with a dash of "West African black magic" thrown in, *Perfume* is an occasionally disturbing, often-times boring, and usually confusing melding of *Requiem*'s type psychological degradation and *Koolhaas's* *Body* paranoias with a mangled mid-wrap-out at the end.

Mimi Farrow plays a young chemist who works on African people (it's talk of "witchcraft and black magic"). After her father pricks her finger on the African's teeth, she begins having chilling visions (in hallucinations) from her troubled past, culminating in a head murder spree and bloody exorcism feast.

Though the film sports an intriguing premise and an effectively disturbing performance by Mimi Farrow as the woman tormented by her own inner demons, *Perfume* is very little due to poor characterization (even Farrow's character seems shallow), slow pacing, and first-time director Francesco Barilli's obvious love for imagery over story. While it doesn't exactly stink, this *Perfume* is no Chanel No. 5.

Reviewed by Bryan Sent

Captive Women

(1962) Dir. Stuart Gilson, Producers Aubrey Wenberg, Jack Pollock Screenwriter, Aubrey Wenberg, Jack Pollock Cinematographer, Paul Veron, Wilbert Clark, Margaret Fink, Gloria Swanson, Ron Randall, Blaise Randall, Wilbur Schallert

"Men was born in brotherhood and in brotherhood must live if he is not to be in chaos." Noble sentiment from one of the "Morlans".

Made by the same production/writer team that brought us the same low-budgeted film *The Man From Planet X* a year earlier and featuring much of the same cast, this one can't hold a candle to that earlier effort. *Captive Women* suffers from a weak storyline, inadequate acting, and most severely from the lack of Edgar G. Ulmer, who directed the atmospheric *Planet X*.

In *Captive Women*, Stuart Gilson's direction proves lifeless and dull, pulling the story of what little energy it can muster. New York in the 19th century is a corrupt past-eternity scene populated by three warring tribes—the Upriver People (the bad guys), the Norms (indifferent, but still our hero because they lack morals), and the Midriver (the good guys) despite their severed appearance from relation passing). The Morlans periodically raid the Norms for normal women with which to breed in an attempt to eradicate the rebellion

within from their own gene pool. They do the only of necessity and are generally a peaceful people, given to talking about loving thy neighbor, rebuilding civilization, and so on. The Upriver people, on the other hand, are bent only on conquest, and send their army to conquer the Norms (their force consists of only six women—budgetary restrictions turning the army into a mini-platoon).

What follows is an hour of dull intrigue, veiled love-interest, and stoner person combat sequences. On the plus side, there are some noble ideas of brotherhood and equality laid out along the way, but these noteworthy sentiments are lost among all the hickering and pointless running about. A few good shots of the natural landscape, with the dark photography setting a somber mood, help to ease the boredom a bit, but in the end *Captive Women* is best shown only to a Captive Audience.

Reviewed by Bryan Sent

The Curse of the Doll People

(1960, Mexico. Dir. by Renato Alvarado, English Language version directed by Paul Negri. Producers Wilbur Schallert, Bill (Bodie) A. Glendon, and Guillermo Calderon, English Language version produced by K. Gordon Murray; Screenplay by Alfred (Abel) Soliman. Director of Photography Henry (Henrique) Wallace. With Elvira Quintana, Raymond (Raymond) Gray, Robert Bruce, Quanta Balas, Xavier Lays, Nera Vayana, Luis Aragon.)

In the early 1960s, former criminal writer and director/writer/producer K. Gordon ("Gag") Murray, who had opened up a Florida film studio, acquired 30 low-budget horror films and eight children's movies from Mexico's *Churubusco-Ameca Studios* (*Ameca* I Shrunk The Kids was later filmed at Churubusco-Ameca). After making a fortune with his various "kiddie movies," Murray turned his showbiz skills toward television, dubbed his 38 Mexican monster movies, and sold the syndication rights to American International Television (the TV distribution arm of AIP). Along with a string of vampire films starring German Huber (such as *The Vampire* and *The Vampire's Coffin*) and a *Barry of Anker Murray* movies, the TV package contained this video oddity, *The Curse of The Doll People*.

In it, a voodoo sorcerer, accompanied by his pre-fabricated zombie, ends up his killer dolls to take vengeance upon those who violate an idol from his Haitian temple. Madge dressed in halcyon business suits and doll in robes creep about with long party nooses. A woman doctor (an expert on the occult) and her fiancé, along with some very staped policemen, try to stop them.

Credit the film for using more authentic "baker" than most, rightly labeling the voodoo sorcerer "baker" and talking of voodoo as a legitimate religion. But then the convoluted script stumbles all the better path by vaguely tying an ancient Egyptian magic in explaining how the baker actually manipulates his dolls (The sorcerer's zombie, named "Sobad," whose face looks like a cross between a monkey and a dead ape, even sleeps in an Egyptian sleeping bag). And, whilst all, the red voodoo is ultimately voodooed when the heroine wears a Christian cross in her hair.

As with most K. Gordon Murray jobs, the dubbed dialogue is often quite funny. "You Pierre," remarks the sorcerer to the heroine, "is essentially a cooking idiot." King Arthur as the sainted one, however, the cast would be better served to a film called *The Curse of The Doll People*. The picture is padded with some other scenes of people standing around talking, some around talking, even being around talking. The dolls themselves manage to contribute one or two oddbody moments as they move over so slowly toward their intended victim, their face expressions, needs in hand, slowly make in every move. But don't get your hopes up, this is still your typical north-of-the-border outlandish junk—good for a few laughs, one or

Boris Karloff stars in the movie as the mad, chain-smoking experimenter Dr. Laurence, his chief adversary is the lovely, redoubtable Anna Lee as Dr. Claire Wyatt. Karloff and Miss Lee would be reunited 10 years later in Val Lewton's *Bedlam*, again to very good effect.

In this movie, Laurence has successfully developed an apparatus that will transfer the mind of one person to the head of another, and vice versa. The scientific community labels him a dangerous droid just as he secretly transfers the mind of his scientist, wheelchair-bound cohort Clayton (Donald Crisp) into the head of his wealthy former banker Lord Haslewood (Frank Collier, who exudes as "both" characters). This early plot twist accounts for the movie's British title, *The Man Who Changed His Mind*. With a newly "enlightened" Lord Haslewood now firmly behind him, Laurence continues to plot while bewildered Clayton/Haslewood struggles to re-educate himself only to learn a horrifying truth: The body of Lord Haslewood harbors a deadly heart condition!

Desperate, the wealthy banker demands the body of the Haslewood Estate's young heirster Dick (John Loder), whose athletic body Laurence also wants.

Looking in, Laurence's former assistant Claire Wyatt, now engaged to Dick Haslewood, becomes more and more suspect. The movie comes to an exciting finish as Laurence murders Clayton/Haslewood then abducts young Haslewood. The clever madman has implicated himself as the murderer, attending to effect the mind transfer before the police can close in. And his beautiful young former assistant is the only person who knows the truth and can stop him.

The screen play by L. Du Corrie Finch, Sidney Gilliat and John L. Halderton contains delicious twists and turns that are beautifully acted by Jack Cox's camera and Viskichinsky's set direction, both smoothly shadowy and atmospheric. The cast members, almost without exception, are first-rate. Yet it's really Karloff's leaning, wild-eyed, constantly smoking mad scientist to whom this thriller belongs. It's the kind of role he craved and he milked it for all it was worth. As his adversary, Anna Lee was so good you almost expected them to give one another the traditional "stage" bow.

The movie's scientific content is lousy, but it's given just enough visual interpretation and dramatic exposition to advance the plot.

Do yourself a favor and give *The Man Who Loved Again* a tumbler. It's a perfect entertainment for a dark night or a rainy day.

Reviewed by Spider Sabbe

Alien Terminator

(1989, New Home) A group of scientists, employed by a company called Earth Tech, work on dangerous experiments five miles beneath the surface of the planet. One of them, drug-addicted "Brianna," has created a virus for the military that will create the ultimate soldier. Things get out of hand when an infected lab rat escapes, which consumes and incorporates each host into its genetic structure. So, by the end of the movie we have a monster that's part rat, part cat, part human.

Although very clearly *Alien* inspired, it is very watchable due to the performances — in a goofy scene the first person infected has a spasm on the breakfast table, only instead of a "chest-buster" this creature explodes out of the guy's back and through the table!

Reviewed by Kevin Lindemann

Coming in Cult Movies #22:
An exclusive interview
with producer/director
Alex Gordon.

Reflections on It's a Wonderful Life



By Rudy Minger

Recently NBC-TV broadcast the 50th Anniversary showing of Frank Capra's 1946 classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. Millions of people saw the film. Undoubtedly many of them wondered, "Why don't they make movies like this anymore?"

Well, the fact of the matter is that they didn't make many movies like this even back then. Philip Van Doren Stern, the original author, spent six years trying to sell his original story. *It's a Wonderful Life* lost money when it was first released. The movie lost the picture to shorts. It was too gentle and sentimental for 1946 audiences who were more inclined to see a shock-up detective movie, war movie, or gangster flick. The movie was so neglected that nobody remembered to renew the copyright when it lapsed in 1976, and it fell into the public domain. That's when *It's a Wonderful Life* was really discovered. Thousands of TV stations started running it every Christmas for free.

Sentiment has been on the decline as a major ingredient in mainstream films since the days of silent pictures. Even Frank Capra's pictures were often dismissed as "Coca-cola" by the critics. *It's a Wonderful Life* was made today, it would most likely be laughed off the screen. In fact, the same night the movie aired this past year, *Saturday Night Live* ran a

parody of the film purporting to be the original ending in which an angry mob stormed Mr. Potter's office and beat him to a pulp. Earlier in the week *Murder With Children* aired and just another parody in which Al Bundy's guardian angel revealed that the world was a better place without him.

For me, the movie plays like a 1940s version of *The Twilight Zone*, in spite of all the sentiment and the overt happy ending, what I really remember about this film is George Bailey's horror at being in a nightmare town where nobody remembers him. Jimmy Stewart's performance really makes this movie. It's difficult to imagine another actor in the role.

There are people who despise this movie because it seems to be saying that George Bailey should settle for mediocrity and stay in Bedford Falls. These are the same people who put *Warner of Oor* far saying that Dorothy should stay in Kansas. I don't go along with this line of thought. The whole point of the movie is that George Bailey makes Bedford Falls a better place by his actions while living there. The ultimate message of this movie is that one man can make a difference, that individual human beings matter, that we all matter in the grand scheme of things.

Not the triteness of messages, but not a bad message to build a movie around. It beats blowing up buildings. ■

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Heart Trouble: A Langdon Masterpiece?



By Michael Copner

Lost films are both tragic and frustrating: to film fans. The tragedy part is obvious. The frustration comes in when, every now and then the films get found — for a while. In 1972 I heard that Lon Chaney's *London After Midnight* had been located and was available for theatrical bookings!

Harry Langdon's feature film, *Heart Trouble*, is to comedy fans what the Chaney film is to the horror crowd — a tragically lost film, subject to speculation and rumor. After three artistic and financial feature-film triumphs and two lesser productions, Harry is said to have been on the artistic rebound with *Heart Trouble*. Its being unavailable for present-day scrutiny make its status as a lost-movie masterpiece all the more frustrating.

The film premiered in October, 1928. Of the plot, *Variety* tells us, "A novel angle on conscription during the war, with a small-town locale and with Langdon in one of his regular moron roles, is used. Forging to get into the Army after postering a recruiting Colonel, Harry, through a coincidence, avers that official's life and blows up an



every ammunition depot."

The *Los Angeles Times* of 9/15/28 spoke well of the film. "Last night's audience at the Boulevard Theater took to the picture with glee. It was not an audience abashed with artificial and vicious amusement, but it was still an audience obviously enjoying itself as it watched the unfolding of the story of Langdon's tribulations and his final heroic triumph in spite of himself."

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* was less enthusiastic. "Here's an example of a good comedian gone wrong. Time was when Harry Langdon could hold his own among the funmakers, but I don't see how this film can raise a laugh in the most good-natured audience in the world. The story was written by Harry Langdon, the picture was directed by Harry Langdon, the star is Harry Langdon, and it's just six reels of too much of Harry Langdon. These be harsh words, but listen 'em."

Photoplay Magazine was harsh enough: "Just a lot of silly gags, no story and enough insane situations to spell the exit of Harry Langdon. It was his cue to give us a good picture. He didn't."

While the *Los Angeles Examiner* gave a tame, non-review kind of review, "*Heart Trouble* is no so funny as it was meant to be, but it kills an afternoon pleasantly enough. Or an evening."

For years the film has been assumed lost. Twenty years ago Raymond Bussard joined with Langdon's widow to search the vaults of the Warner Brothers' lot to see if any prints or negatives could be located, to no avail. Made in late 1928, as silent films were being overshadowed by the coming of sound, most studios did not care to waste time, money and storage space keeping "dead" product considered to have no future commercial value. The only hope may be some private film collector, or the off chance that an old nitrate print still sits quietly backstage or in the projection booth of some 70-year-old theater. Naturally anyone with any information on this film is welcome to contact this magazine!

In the meantime, it is with pleasure that we announce Kino Video's release of Langdon's three first feature films on home video: *Trump, Trump, Trump* and *The Strong Man* are seen in better quality than ever before, and *Long Pants* is a worthy but only enjoyable transfer of a film rarely available to silent comedy fans. All are accompanied by new musical soundtracks of superior quality. These will be reaching the stores as we go to press.

Next issue we will have our long-awaited feature story on Harry Langdon, including some new, rare material and interviews ■

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Cult Movie People: Katherine Orrison



Cult Movies Magazine editor Michael Copner talks with Katherine Orrison.

Interviewed by Michael Copner

One of the joys of editing this magazine is getting the chance to meet our writers. *Cult Movies* has assembled quite a family of exceptional critics and reviewers. Some of them are exclusive discoveries of our own, while others — such as Frank Delio Sentinard and Ronald V. Bonk — extend back to the glory days of *Phetone* magazine in the 1960s and '70s.

With this issue we inaugurate a new feature wherein we will interview some of these colorful personalities and allow you to meet the real people behind the writings.

Katherine Orrison has worked as a designer in live-action and animated film. She's written many books and articles on film and will have a book published this spring on Cecil B. DeMille's epic, *The Ten Commandments*. Written in Stone. She is known to *Cult Movies* readers for her articles and interviews, her most recent being her interview with Yvonne DeCarlo. A lively Scorpio with a wild sense of humor, we know you'll enjoy meeting the real Katherine Orrison in this intimate, candid interview.

Cult Movies: When was that moment the film became a way of life for you — something beyond merely going to the movies?

Katherine Orrison: It was my first movie! *The Mouse Is Bored* in 1962. I was three years old and my parents took me to a drive-in theater for the first time and I saw William Holden on that huge screen. They put a drive-in speaker on both windows of our car and I was transfixed by Holden's voice and the whole movie experience. So I was hooked on films from that age on.

My first film crush was on Kirk Douglas when I saw *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *The Vikings*. All the kids in the neighborhood integrated that film into our play and we'd enact scenes from it as in our backyard.

I knew I was going to have a lifelong thing with men in the movies when I saw Gary Cooper in *The General Dicks At Danes*.

CM: It sounds like your affair with the movies

was extremely sexual!

KO: Yes! I was crazy about these guys. And on television it was Gardner McKay on *Adventure in Paradise*. He was a real hunk.

CM: So you've carried this all through your adult life and you'd say that film was a personal and driving force for you?

KO: Absolutely. And not theater. There was no film school when I graduated from high school and wanted to go to film school. There weren't any! AFI hadn't been created — nothing. The only accredited classes that had anything to do with it was Pasadena Playhouse and of course that was all theater. I'd sit there bored out of my mind because these people were talking about theater like it was the end all and be all and I'd say, "These people are crazy — it's film!" People from my generation came along, such as Coppola and Scorsese, who were mad about film and wanted to direct film. They didn't want to be stage directors. So eventually film school had to be created.

CM: How did film usurp the authority away from live theater?

KO: Sincerely enough, it was through television. There was that huge exposure to 30 years worth of film all at once when television grew big in the 1950s. There's actually a serious gap in my education of 1950s films because of that, since I wasn't old enough to go to the movies by myself. But I wasn't too young to work the dials on the TV set. So a whole generation drank in three previous decades worth of film as youngsters, and the experience was a new, overwhelming phenomenon. It had never happened before like that, and it's all different now because of it.

CM: Here's a two part question. What's your favorite film, and what film would you name as the greatest one of all?

KO: The greatest film is *Intolerance*. It writes the book on everything anybody's going to do in film for the rest of the 20th century. And they still haven't caught up with the concept of simultaneous stories going on at the present moment, flashing between many moments in time. D. W.

Griffith believed in the same concept that Eisenstein subscribed to. Namely, that all time is simultaneous. As you and I are sitting here now, there are Indians sitting here in a different time frequency, and there are cavemen sitting in this spot in still a different time frequency from that.

CM: And the future people are sitting here also?

KO: Yes. Griffith believed that and he shows us four stories taking place in four different time periods, with four sets of actors, and cuts back and forth between them. And he actually has the nerve to have three out of four of the stories end tragically. There's only one happy Hollywood ending — the others end in horrible death. I don't think anyone's had the guts to produce anything else like that yet. And no one's had the vision to entwine four different stories in one film.

CM: So he had a philosophy behind this — it wasn't just a gimmick he dreamed up?

KO: There was a vital philosophy! And Griffith said he had been given a mission by God. That he saw Jesus appear to him when he was seven years old. Jesus didn't speak, but Griffith spoke to Jesus. He said, "My name is David which means Blessed Of God, and I promise to live up to my name." And as he grew older he saw film as a holy mission, not just a way to make a quick buck. He tried to make each film a masterpiece and was deadly serious about his art.

Griffith felt that film was the universal language the Bible speaks of when it says that before the apocalypse the world will have a universal language, all the world will know of all the most of the world and know of its people. He thought that would be through film. He told his actors that — he said this will touch all people.

Now for your second question! My favorite film? It has to be *Movie*. Because Gary Cooper is sexy in that film in a way that he's not sexy in any other picture. He is the object of desire, not Marlene Dietrich. People think that these films were built around Marlene to make her the most desirable woman in the world. In this film he's the woman, she's the man. She's pursuing him and he's the object of desire. And he's so sexy you can't take your eyes off of him.

CM: Somewhere along the line, Cecil B. DeMille came into your awareness.

KO: When I was eight years old and saw *The Ten Commandments*. And one thing that makes him fascinating is that DeMille started working side by side, the same time as Griffith. And DeMille survived while Griffith didn't.

CM: Side by side?

KO: DeMille arrived here in 1913 and in 1914 he makes *The Square Mile*. In 1914 Griffith makes *Birth of a Nation* here. Two landmark, milestone epics. Talk about simultaneous time lines, there it is. They were born about the same also. Griffith in 1878 and DeMille in 1882, so there's only a four year difference in their ages. DeMille outlived Griffith by a good decade. Griffith died in 1948, DeMille in 1959.

CM: So what was the difference between the two?

KO: Griffith owned the whole story and that was his big mistake. He made so much money on *Birth of a Nation* and that was all his own money he put into *Intolerance* and he lost it all because nobody went to see it.

DeMille had a tremendous advantage because he was best friends with the head of Bank of America. DeMille sat on the board of Bank of America, and they would consult him about which films the bank should invest in when independent producers came to them. DeMille almost made the same slip-up that Griffith made, but then he closed his studio and made his films for Paramount and MGM for the rest of his life. He saw that if you were going to be on the creative end, it wasn't good to also be on the money end. There has to be someone with a firm hand holding the money.

The other thing he had going for him was that his heirs knew what the audiences wanted to see. He made some fairly risqué product. Then the codes cracked down on him and he got real creative — he made sexy films and called them biblical epics, and he got away with murder.

Griffith knew nothing about money. He followed his vision right into bankruptcy. He never got back on his feet and when sound came in at scared the hell out of him. Whereas DeMille wasn't the least bit perturbed. They told him he couldn't make silent films anymore, so he said, "Fine, I'll make a musical." There's a really early sound film of his that is a musical — it's weird, but it's a musical. *Moderne Satou* is a wild one. Anybody who thinks they've got a handle on DeMille should see it.

CM: I've never seen it.

KO: You'll love it. A dirigible goes down in a city reservoir and all these women jump out with parachutes and fall clothes on. It's the ultimate cult movie. DeMille could be funny and sexy.

CM: In this country it seems that people have become the combination of sex with violence.

KO: You shouldn't combine them. They don't do it so much in Europe, but now they do it more in America. A film can go too far. When you have a little bit of restraint, you get creative, like DeMille did. Then you have some of your clearest writing, creative direction, and new ideas. But when you can do anything and everything, who cares? No one does it artistically. They're just doing it to make a buck and it's usually terrible.

CM: Besides these sexy men you were talking about, what personality in the movies most impresses you?

KO: Chaplin is certainly the greatest personality of the 1920's. At the time he was working side by side with Griffith, Pickford, and Fairbanks. He outlived them all and his work has outlived them all. They say that, personally Fairbanks hit up a room. If he walked in here right now it would be electrifying. But I don't think his work has lasted the way Chaplin's has.

It's amazing the way Valentino continues to intrigue people, but it's because he was such a cool performer, and it was easy to read into his face whatever you wanted to see there. If you saw him without clothes, his body was nearly perfect, as if it was sculpted. So he's easy on the eyes. And he's very graceful. Fairbanks was athletic, but not graceful. The next to come along who was graceful and sexy was Flynn. They never did call him the new Valentino because he was so special on his own.

Another of my favorites is Buddy Rogers. All the silent stars had greater charisma than the average star of today, and Rogers had amazing charisma. You couldn't survive as a silent movie actor if you didn't have a certain extra something to make the public look at you and make the



The greatest film is *Intolerance*. It writes the book on everything anybody's going to do in film for the rest of the 20th century. And they still haven't caught up with the concept of simultaneous stories going on at the present moment, flashing between many moments in time.

audience want to read their thoughts into your face. The audience had to participate in silent film. They don't have to participate today, so they have become passive observers. That's how audiences became lazy. In silent film you can't take your eyes off the screen, you can't think about something else, because you're going to miss out.

All our great stars of the 1930s and '40s still had that special quality because they started in silent film. Gary Cooper, Garbo, Gable, William Powell, Ronald Colman. Even Marlene Dietrich started in silent films in Germany — and these people we're talking about all moved pretty easily into sound.

The *Cult Movies* readers enjoy Bela Lugosi, who acted in silent films in Hungary, Germany, and America. When sound came in he was a little handicapped by not knowing English that well, so he was more of his face, more of his body, more of his eyes to communicate to the audience, and that's what makes him such a great actor. He learned that part of his craft in silent films.

CM: Yes, and on the stage.

KO: But that wouldn't be essential to acting in silent films. Gary Cooper was never on stage. And a lot of great stage actors came out to Hollywood, like Alfred Hunt and Lynn Fontaine, and couldn't make it in films. They never caught on that acting in silent films was interactive. They're talking now about CD-ROM being inter-active, like this is something new. Silent movies were inter-active! You had to read, think, and imagine — and you can't trust it passively the way you can with sound films.

CM: You made a remark once about Jackie Gleason being a great silent actor on television.

KO: My father loved Gleason doing *The Poor Soul* character. If that isn't great silent acting I don't know what is. And I just happen to like his humor. People carry on about the Jewish comedians in Vaudeville and go on about that. And here's

Gleason and Caerney, two Irish guys, and they're the best. They had a great chemistry together, and Gleason knew it. He never had that kind of chemistry with anybody else. I also like an actor who's not afraid to show you the faults of a character. And Gleason's a master at that. He could show you the bad side of a character, but then manage to show you that the guy has a heart and some good intentions. That contrast shows you a whole human being. And he had the power at CBS to tell them what he wanted to do. Although he was too young to have been a silent movie actor, he knew pantomime was something he was good at. So his variety shows always had pantomime sketches that could have come right out of a silent comedy.

CM: Talking about all these people brings to mind the vast number of books and articles on *Haunted Hollywood*. Do you buy into any of that?

KO: I don't know how the town cannot be haunted. Because there's so much ambition, and heartbreak concentrated in one spot. There are so many great personalities concentrated in one spot. The movie is that there aren't more ghosts lingering in Hollywood. But I do think that when they tear down the buildings, the ghosts leave. And in the last ten years we've lost so many old buildings!

CM: Have you ever had a direct ghostly contact?

KO: The Cecil B. DeMille house had the curtain feel of DeMille. The family never talked about it — it was just accepted that, "Yes, he's still here." There were several spots in the house that were always cold.

I think that if you live in a place long enough, some essence of your being remains there along with everything else. Or even living somewhere for a short time if the experiences are intense.

CM: In your view, what qualities must a film have in order to be great?

KO: It should affect you on all levels and be that universal language that Griffith believed in. A silent film — even a foreign film will touch you, and you won't even know you're reading subtitles. I see *Kurosawa* and I cry every single time. That film is not a Japanese film, it's a universal film. That man is not a Japanese man, he's a man. What he's going through, every single person will go through at the end of their life. Why were you here? Did you do anything positive? Do you leave anything behind? Does anybody love you?

I feel that when we die, we watch a movie of our life and see all the events in chronological order. I've heard so many people who've had near-death experiences say that that's exactly what they do — they re-live their lives on an emotional level, in minute detail, observing the cause and effect results of their actions.

CM: Could that be what purgatory is?

KO: It's possible, because many of these people have claimed that that was the hardest experience they'd ever gone through: to watch the good and the bad they'd done and see the results. And they came back changed, improved people. Because they're the rarest critics of themselves and they can't look away from it.

And any great movie will be like that. It will effect you spiritually and effect you for the rest of your life. It becomes part of the culture and you carry it with you. People can talk to each other in shorthand about their favorite films and know exactly what the other person is talking about. That's how great film becomes a way of life. ■

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Lois Laurel Hawes Remembers Her Father, Stan Laurel

by Ralph Schiller
and Ted Okuda

Stan Laurel (1890-1965) and Oliver Hardy (1892-1957) were the screen's greatest comedy team, and their popularity is still going strong. "It's a good feeling to know that my father's work is still being enjoyed by fans," says Stan's daughter, Lois Laurel Hawes. "People come up to me all the time to say how much they love the boys."

Unlike so many stories of children of celebrities, Lois' memories of her father are warm, loving ones. And she shares those memories during her personal appearances, along with her husband, performer and comedy writer Tony Hawes (*The Koppies*, *Steve Allen*, *Real People*, *The Day O' Coney Show*), on behalf of The Sons of the Desert, the international fan organization honoring Laurel & Hardy and their films.

In this interview conducted in 1988, Lois fondly recalled the years when she was growing up with one of the legendary comic screen greats.

CM: What was it like growing up as Stan Laurel's daughter?

Hawes: That's one question I'm always asked. As I look back on it, it was a special childhood, really. Laurel & Hardy and their films were around me all the time. I spent a lot of time on the set with my father. I actually saw the films being shot. When they were shooting in the neighborhood—they would often shoot at the park across from the Beverly Hills Hotel—they would come home for lunch.

And I went to the sneak-previews of the movies. They usually went out to towns, to Glendale or Pasadena, and saw the completed picture.

CM: Did your classmates treat you any differently because of your father's celebrity status?

Hawes: No, because most of the students at Beverly Hills High had parents in the industry. We were just kids and our parents' profession wasn't the topic of conversation. In fact, it wasn't too long ago that I ran across a girl who had gone to school with me and I had no idea her father was Walter Woolf King, who had appeared with my father in *Swiss Miss* (1938).

CM: What reaction do people have now?

Hawes: It's incredible to me why people would want to talk to me, but there seems to be such a great thirst for knowledge about the boys. I don't feel I'm a celebrity, but through the Sons of the Desert, which is the appreciation society for Laurel & Hardy, I travel all over and I'm happy to do



it. CM: Did you ever have any ambition to follow in your father's footsteps and get into show business?

Hawes: Not really. I was never interested in being an actress. I had a terrible memory, so the thought of having to learn scripts scared me. But I love the business and I've always been close to it.

My father would have done anything to help me, but he impressed upon me that it wasn't easy. It could be an awful struggle.

CM: Did your family socialize much with Oliver Hardy?

Hawes: Oh, yes. Especially at holiday times, birthdays and other special occasions. Oliver Hardy, or "Babe" as his friends called him, and his wife didn't have any children, so I was sort of adopted by them.

There have been many articles written stating that the team didn't socialize offscreen, but that just wasn't true. They simply had different interests. Oliver loved the racetrack and had a stable of horses. He also played golf all the time. My father also played golf, but he really wasn't into the sport that much. He had a boat and enjoyed deep-sea fishing. My father also liked gardening.

CM: Were they funny offscreen?

Hawes: Definitely. My father wasn't always "on," like some comedians, but if they were having dinner, they could make something funny out of a situation that might arise. Being funny was part of their nature.

CM: Was there a lot of ad-libbing when they were making the films?

Hawes: Some, but they worked on a scene over and over. They started in the morning with a plan and they would work at it. Then the gag-writers would take over. There were a lot of changes. I would think, "How can they go through this so

many times?" But my father was a perfectionist. Sometimes it would even get down to the editing room and if he wasn't happy with something, they'd go back and film a scene over again.

CM: Did your father have a favorite film of his? Hawes: Way Out West (1937) was both Dad's and Babe's favorite film. My father liked westerns, anyway. He had produced some "B" westerns with Fred Scott in the late 1930s.

CM: Which comedians did your father admire? Hawes: His idol was Charlie Chaplin. He also admired Buster Keaton, Harry Langdon and Harold Lloyd. And, of course, Jimmy Fursayson, who was a dear friend. Later on, my dad loved Red Skelton and Dick Van Dyke on television.

Charlie Chase was also a favorite of his. My father was saddened when Charley died in 1940. It was a shame he died so young.

CM: Laurel & Hardy are now considered to be among the greatest comedians of all time, but during their prime, critical reception was hardly overwhelming. How did your father feel about this lack of critical recognition?

Hawes: It didn't bother him. He felt that he and Babe made "B" pictures all along, and that Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd made the "A" films.

CM: During the 1930s, Bud Abbott & Lou Costello became the reigning comedy team in films. Did your father resent the fact that the Abbott & Costello pictures were more popular than the Laurel & Hardy's?

Hawes: That was during the time when my Dad and Babe were making films over at 20th Century Fox and MGM. At those studios, Dad didn't have the same control over his work like he had at Hal Roach. He didn't resent Abbott & Costello's success, but he did feel that the poor quality of the later Laurel & Hardy pictures was to blame for their slipping popularity.

As a matter of fact, Abbott & Costello used to come over to our house for dinner. They would do a lot of "shop-talk," as I called it, and discuss gags and so forth at the dinner table. I thought Bud and Lou were very funny, although at the time I didn't think they were as funny as my father. But I was an Abbott & Costello fan, and today Chris Costello, Lou's daughter, and I are very close. We have a lot in common.

CM: Were you also on the sets of the later Laurel & Hardy films?

Hawes: Yes, but not as much as I had been when they were at Hal Roach. And I wasn't at MGM as much as I was at Fox. At the time, I was attending Beverly Hills High School, which happened to be right next door to Fox, so I could go over there after school.

CM: They left 20th Century Fox in 1945 after completing their last American movie, *The Bullfighters*. From 1945 to 1960, the team didn't work in films.

Hawes: After the string of disappointing pictures made at Fox and MGM, I don't know if they really tried all that hard to get established with another studio. They did some tours abroad. They were happy being on the road. It was a change from making films. I can't say it was easier, though. Traveling is hard.

CM: Their last film was the French-Italian production, *Alibi* (1951), released in the U.S. as *Ukase* (1954).

Hawes: That picture was a disaster right from the beginning. The production started on April 1, 1950, and was completed on April 1, 1951. It's ironic that both dates should fall on April Fool's Day. None of the crew spoke English. They kept bringing in new people who tried to salvage the project, but they all had tremendous difficulty.

And on location they were both very ill. I think they look bad in the picture. They were sick and it shows. It's not one of my favorite films.

CM: Stan and Oliver were the "surprise subjects" of a 1954 *This Is Your Life* program. It's been reported that your father wasn't happy with the results.

Hawes: At the time, it was such a surprise and my father was a little annoyed by it. He was such a perfectionist, and it bothered him to go out unprepared in front of an audience.

As the years went on, however, he mellowed. I



Stan Laurel, daughter Lois and Oliver Hardy are all smiles in this publicity shot from *A-Hunting We Will Go* (1942).

think it was a good show. It was a hard show to do; they were used to covering only one life, and here they had two. It was a bit hectic.

CM: In the years after Hardy's death, your father turned down numerous movie and TV offers.

Hawes: He was so disheartened when Babe died in 1957. He had no real interest in working after that. He felt that he had been more successful as part of a team than as a solo performer. Dad was offered a part in *Around the World in Eighty Days* and he did consider doing it, but his doctor didn't feel that going to Mexico, where his home would have been filmed, was a good idea because of Dad's diabetes.

But even though he was no longer active in the business, he still enjoyed talking about it and having people over to visit. Jerry Lewis would come over and ask for advice. But Dad didn't want to be a consultant or get credit. And he didn't care to go to a studio every day. He was just happy to help.

CM: There have been varying accounts of your father's later years. Some reports claim he was almost destitute, while others say he was financially comfortable.

Hawes: He didn't die a wealthy man, like Harold

Lloyd, but he lived very well. He received quite a large annuity every month from his business investments and that compensated for not getting residuals for his films. Dad preferred to live in a small, but very nice apartment so that his wife wouldn't have a lot of work to do.

There have been reported accounts that he died in poverty. Every year Jerry Lewis used to send him a lovely Christmas hamper of cheeses, wine and so forth. Several years after my father died, it was reported that Jerry sent care packages. It was quite upsetting to the family because we knew the real story and to see that falsehood in print was very difficult for us.

CM: Your father was very loyal to his fans and answered their letters.

Hawes: Oh, yes. He'd sit at the typewriter and diligently "hunt-and-peck" [laughs]. He felt that if fans took the time to write him, then he owed them a response. He felt very strongly about this.

CM: Over the years, there have been many Laurel & Hardy imitations. What do you think of them?

Hawes: The only ones the families approve of are Jim McGeorge and Chuck McCann. They've been in several commercials and TV shows and do a beautiful job.

CM: They were a team for three decades. That's a phenomenal record. How were they able to stay together for so long?

Hawes: It was the mutual respect they had for each other. Babe left a lot of things up to my father because he felt that Dad would make the right decisions. I recall that my Dad always said he watched Oliver on the screen more than he did himself. He felt Babe was a very funny man.

CM: Everyone seems to love Laurel & Hardy. What do you think makes them so special?

Hawes: Well, you can see the love and respect they had for each other. Both were kind and gentle men, and that also comes across. Their comedy is timeless. Even in non-English speaking countries, people can still understand their movies because of the pantomime.

Many fans come up to me and tell me how much they love Laurel & Hardy, and I can tell their feelings are genuine. I'm thrilled and honored to know that, after all these years, people still greatly enjoy Dad and Babe's work. ■



Rare Production Shots From Laurel & Hardy's Jitterbugs



Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy starred in more movie feature films after leaving Hal Roach studios for good in 1940. Laurel & Hardy appeared in six films for Fox, two for MGM, and one foreign-made feature, *Utopia*. Of the films, *Jitterbugs*, made in 1943 for Fox, is considered by many fans to be the best of the post-Hal Roach features.

Most Laurel & Hardy fans despise the later films that the boys made at Fox and MGM, mistaking Laurel & Hardy's lack of control over the content of the pictures made at these studios. This was primarily Stan Laurel's fault, because in the mid to late 1930s he was suffering from a kind of "Charlie Chaplin complex" (he "I am a genius syndrome") and batted producer Hal Roach incessantly over the Laurel & Hardy films. The fighting with Roach, coupled with Laurel's serious drinking and marital problems, made Stan's command control over the

creative process an impossibility as far as the other studios were concerned.

At Fox studios, this lack of input stifled Laurel & Hardy's creativity and severely damaged their characters. To make things worse, Fox always seemed to assign writers to the films who did not understand Laurel & Hardy's basic characters or their type of humor.

This situation was particularly frustrating to Stan Laurel. Nothing allowed to show in the creative process, he was reduced to being a screen actor, something he was never very good at anyway. On the other hand, Oliver

Critical opinions of Jitterbugs from the original release:

The very best we can say for *Jitterbugs*, the new Laurel & Hardy comedy, is that it shows a slight improvement over *Air Kaid Warden*, their preceding vehicle, which was their worst.

—NY Daily News

Film amazingly a times standard previously set by comedians in degree of humor.

—Daily Variety

The humor is weak even for Laurel & Hardy who have been coming on their former momentum for the last three or four pictures.

—NY Post

There is also some vagrant amusement in Cifari's posturing as a Texas colored, neither the worst nor the best of the boy's films.

—NY Times

generally unshy Laurel & Hardy feature, a dealer for houses where the comedians something.

—Variety

quite an improvement over the previous L&H stories.

—NY Journal

Laurel & Hardy show in better advantage than they have in ages.

—The Film Daily

Finely designed for the Laurel & Hardy personnel following, this picture will neither cut nor increase it.

—NY Mirror

Stan Laurel & Oliver Hardy take a step backward in *Jitterbugs*, a long step back toward the days when they were a funny pair of comedians. When this comedy was made someone revived the old idea that the two were worth bothering about—the picture may not be quite as funny as this report indicates, but the boys have been so shamelessly neglected by writers lately even a possible comedy comes as a delightful surprise to an old Laurel & Hardy fan from way back.

—NY Telegram

Hardy, who was never really very involved in the pre-production creative process at Roach, was a good actor and the lack of good writing did not effect his excellent contributions as an actor.

Jitterbugs, Laurel & Hardy's third Fox film, was a considerable improvement over the previous two films. This time Fox assigned a veteran comedy director, Mel St. Clair, and a new writer, Scott Darling, to the Laurel & Hardy series and things seemed to get marginally better. *Jitterbugs* was filmed from 2/15/43 to 3/18/43 and was released nationally on 6/11/43.

The total negative cost on *Jitterbugs* was \$318,600. The picture did very well at the box-office, the total domestic film rental was \$468,600 while the foreign total was \$285,400 for a worldwide total of \$1,054,000. The total profit was approximately \$403,400.

The final bottom line was a lot of fun and both Laurel & Hardy seemed to be more enthusiastic as their performance than had been true of their last few films. Laurel did a female impersonation during the film and Hardy got to indulge in some fine character acting when he impersonated a Southern colored in the movie. The critics, who were never very enthusiastic about Laurel & Hardy during their careers, were mostly lukewarm towards the film. Many pointed out that you either liked Laurel & Hardy or you didn't. Fortunately, even the years many more people have seemed to really like Laurel & Hardy.

—Buddy Burrell

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Where Ed Wood Meets Larry Flynt



Larry Flynt makes a cameo appearance as a judge in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*.

Interview by Alex McGregor

Are Larry Karaszewski and Scott Alexander talented writers or two of the biggest con men in Hollywood? In relatively quick succession their scripts about two iconoclastic weirdos, to put it nicely, Ed Wood and Larry Flynt have been backed by and released by major Hollywood studios. No small achievement given that both Ed Wood and Larry Flynt would have been hard pressed to get a studio drive-in pass before their misadventures were encapsulated on celluloid.

That *Ed Wood* and *The People vs. Larry Flynt* were even made in the first place is an achievement in itself. But both these films have pushed the boundaries of what is acceptable in American cinema. At a time when the generic Hollywood studio film has become increasingly banal and one dimensional, Scott and Karaszewski have written scripts that embrace moral ambiguity and question the acceptable notions of what makes a hero.

While Karaszewski and Alexander have earned their reputation as the "break-bro-pick-kings"—one upcoming project is a bio-pic of comedian Andy Kaufman—such sobriquets distract from the versatility of their work. Their writing credits range from *That Darn Cat* to a low-action version of *The Jetsons*, as well as uncredited rewrites of *Mars Attacks*.

Cult Movies It seems surprising that you even bothered to take your Larry Flynt story to Columbia.

Scott Alexander: We figured that if there is one studio in town that doesn't like me and Larry, it has to be Columbia because they had passed on *Ed Wood*. They told us that because *Ed Wood* was in black and white it would just be a "midnight" movie. So when we put together our Larry Flynt pitch which was about 45 minutes long, we de-

cided that we needed a dress rehearsal, just to run past some execs, to see where the laughs were, to see how the pitch played and then take it to some real buyers. We figured we could use and abuse the Columbia executives because we knew that they would never buy it, so we would waste an hour of their time without them knowing it. But at least we could see how the pitch played.

Larry Karaszewski: When they asked us if we had any ideas we told them we had something but we asked them if they could get us many people as possible into the room because we wanted to have

These people were so outrageous it is not as though we have to make up a lot of crazy things for them to do. They are completely insane individuals so the problem has been how to corral that insanity and put it in a plausible motion picture form.

a bit of an audience here. So they filled the room with executives, and we started telling our story, all the time telling them that it was going to be in color. They were laughing their heads off, actually jumping up and down, they just loved it.

SA: Having all those execs in the room was one of the reasons for the success of the pitch. Normally if you pitch to one exec he has to turn around and pitch it to his boss. The fact that we had Lisa Henson in the room, meant that she was hearing our version of Larry Flynt rather than some other exec retelling it to her a week later.

LK: At the same time we were at Columbia thinking they weren't going to buy it, we had sent a three-page outline to Oliver Stone hoping that we would hook up with him and go to Warner Bros.

[where he had a deal]. But then a week after Columbia committed, we got a call from Oliver, saying I'm really interested. So we told him that Lisa Henson had just bought it, and why don't you see if you can hook up with her. So it was set up at Columbia for Oliver to produce and direct.

SA: By the time we had finished researching and writing out a script, Oliver was off making *Nixon*. He didn't want Nixon to slow down our momentum so he suggested we find another director. We kept on suggesting Miles Forman, and he hadn't made a film during the '90s so we weren't taken very seriously. One of the things that we liked about his work is the mixture of tones—he can be funny but he can also be very serious and dramatic.

LK: Most directors either do comedies or dramas. What is great about Miles's films, particularly *Cuckoo's Nest*, is that they way he mixes the drama with humor. And that's what we were trying for, the same mix of comedy and seriousness.

SA: Initially Columbia's instinct was to get a comedy director, and they started submitting comedy directors, and we worried that was the way the movie was made, that it was just going to be treated as straight comedy.

LK: Oliver was very instrumental in getting Miles. Initially Miles wasn't sure if he should get back into the whole film business, not having made a movie in the '90s. Heard Oliver had a long chat and Oliver really convinced him to come back and make another film.

SA: He made him an offer he couldn't refuse.

LK: Yeah, unlimited access to back issues of *Hustler* magazine.

CM: Given the political climate with both Dole and the Christian Coalition slagging off Hollywood for its lack of morals, it would seem that the last thing any studio would want in an election year is a film about Larry Flynt.

LK: That was bought up as a positive. Initially when we started filming in January, the idea was to have the film out in late October, early November with the hope that Bob Dole would pick on us and generate a bit of controversy.

SA: We even wanted it to come out election week, but for marketing reasons it got pushed to the end of December. Still it was a good idea.

CM: Is Larry Flynt a real first amendment hero or was he just trying to make a buck?

LK: He's both for us, and we've tried to make it so that it is totally up to the audience to decide for themselves. But you should remember that just because Larry Flynt was making a ton of money from his publications doesn't mean the threat of his being locked up in prison for 25 years is any less great. Nor does making money, make any of his political points less valid. *Time* magazine certainly makes money but if someone tried to censor *Time* magazine you wouldn't criticize *Time* magazine for making a buck.

SA: I don't think Larry Flynt himself is sure. A broad overview of the movie is of a guy who liked women, who liked making money and who stumbled into doing something important. But in the home stretch we're still having it both ways. We make it quite clear that he always stands to

profit off these decisions

LK: In reality it is both ways — he is putting himself on the line and he is trying to make a buck. I think it is an ambiguous film and I think that is a good thing. I think that most Hollywood mainstream films tell you what to think every step of the way. This movie leaves you something to think about and argue about. Certainly we're not trying to present him as an all-American hero.

SA: Nor was the movie intended to be the final word on all censorship issues. It was not meant to be a college thesis on the first amendment. We are trying to make *fastly*, an entertaining film, and secondly, a film that says something, but says something and not everything.

CM: Is it restricting having to stick to the facts when you are writing a bio-pic?

SA: On Ed Wood there was a structural problem in that the personal film was the first movie that Ed made. In a traditional story structure you would have a guy crank out junk for a few years and then realize, I must create "Art," I must reveal myself to the world, and that is the climax.

LK: It should have been that he makes *Plan 9*, etc. and it is junk and he has to make *Glen or Glena*, and tell "my" story.

SA: But we were stuck with *Plan 9* at the end or if we felt like it we could dribble down into the sappy porn era but we weren't really interested in doing that. So the facts of Ed Wood's life weren't so much a liability as a challenge to work with what is in front of us. As soon as we looked at Larry Flynt's life and saw the supreme court victory with *Felwell* we knew we had a third act. Working backwards from there we figured out the structure of the movie, with a minor restructuring of time. Most of the bio-pics just change the stories for a no good reason, they don't even seem to respect the adventures the subject had, they just want to create their own. We think, why tell someone's life if we are not going to use the real



Woody Harrisson as Larry Flynt and his brother Brett Harrisson as Jimmy Flynt

events. What's the purpose?

CM: How important is it to stick to the facts of a story when you want to be entertaining as well?

LK: We try as much as possible to stick to the facts. I think it is one of the reasons why we have stumbled into this "anti-grain man bio-pic" as that is both films — Ed Wood and Larry Flynt — and in our upcoming film on comedian, Andy Kaufman, truth is funnier than fiction. These people were so outrageous it is not as though we have to make up a lot of crazy things for them to do. They are completely insane individuals so the problem has been how to corral that insanity and put it in a plausible motion picture form.

SA: What we're doing is dealing with the broad overview of a person's life, through the anecdotes. If you want to sit down and analyze a bio-pic, well neither of us were in the room when say, Larry had an argument with his lawyer in 1976 but we know the end result. The challenge is making that believable and entertaining.

CM: Did meeting Larry Flynt affect your story at all?

LK: We had already written our first draft when we had our first big meeting with Larry Flynt so we had already done our take on him and his story. I think if anything our feelings solidified for him on meeting him. We were a little frightened having seen all the clips from the seventies and meeting him now, he has been in a wheelchair for a long time. He turned out to be a much softer presence, a fairly nice man with a good sense of humor. Certainly we didn't know how he would react when he read the script. He took us into a room and said, "I read the script and there is a lot of things that I should be really embarrassed about and I am embarrassed, and I wish it wasn't in the movie but that's not to say it's not true. But how on Earth did you find out so much about me?" Perhaps because he is such a compulsive man there hasn't been a book about Larry Flynt, or even very many investigative articles about his life.

SA: What's good about Larry is that a lot of his stories, his adventures showed up verbatim in the newspapers, he lived his life so publicly. A lot of the major stunts that he pulled we found as essentially verbatim transcripts in the *LA Times Mirror* section. So we had read every article ever written about him, more importantly we had also had lunch with a lot of ex-employees, friends and ex-friends.

LK: The only things that Larry Flynt was bothered by were the few minute details that because we weren't in the room weren't correct. Like we had worked breakfast and molasses into a scene with Larry at a salad bar. And Larry Flynt'd say, "No, no, no... I love molasses but I would never put that on a salad bar."



Courtney Love as Flynt's wife Allison. Photo by Sidney Belikov

(continued)

SA: That's how we do our research, we compile endless facts about the subject, and try and work them in. We'd have long lists of things that Larry Flynt likes, like Cheez Whiz on crackers, like biscuits and molasses. In our long draft from our lists we worked cheese and crackers, and biscuits and molasses into two different scenes. As we cut down the pages we found ourselves cutting the scenes but we wanted to keep the factoid. So let's find another place where he can eat and we will shove the biscuits and molasses into that scene. Unfortunately we moved the biscuits into the wrong place and Larry Flynt got angry.

LK: Even if we'd have worked it in successfully, it would never have made it into the film because Woody (Harrison) is such a health food junky that it would be very difficult to get him to eat molasses. I remember Courtney (Love) and Woody doing scenes one day, and Courtney was trying to feed Woody a potato chip. Because he was in character he had to eat the potato chip but you could tell that he was not liking it and she was just playing with him.

CM: You mentioned talking to Flynt's ex-employees, was it hard to find these people?

SA: They found us. They were jumping out of the woodwork to talk to us.

LK: One interesting thing about Larry Flynt is that he runs a lot of magazines, and they are not all respectable so there is a high turnover of people working there. A lot of people who were getting out of journalism school got their first job at Flynt publications. They are a student one day and the next day they are the editor of some sleazy magazine. Usually they don't last long so there are a lot of ex-employees, with stories to tell.

SA: A lot of these people collected articles from the time that Larry Flynt was in their life and they became a great source for research material.

LK: We had one piece written by Terry South-

ern and Dennis Hopper about their time living in the Larry Flynt mansion. Althea had an idea to produce a movie about Jim Morrison, and she had hired Southern to write it. Hopper to direct it. They were being paid cash on a weekly basis. There is a scene in the film when marshals attack the house, well Hopper and Southern were actually in the house at the time. They were sleeping and being over. One of the reasons we didn't write that scene is that we didn't want to have someone play Hopper.

CM: One of the most talked about things about Larry Flynt is the casting. Unusual for writers, you were involved in all aspects of the film, you were even consulted during the casting process.

SA: Larry even got Tom Laughlin of *Beily Jack* fame. So Miles Forman checked him out, and says, "Hey, he is pretty good, let's use him. The studio keeps saying they want more stars, let's give them the Tom Laughlin bone." Miles is thinking this is a way of appeasing the management!

LK: Miles didn't know that I had picked the weirdest, strangest star on Earth. Miles was "Oh fine, I'll use Tom Laughlin."

SA: Miles is saying, "Okay they can have Woody Harrison and Tom Laughlin." And he pursued a Tom Laughlin came in and read for the movie! And Miles became so enamored with him that he told him, you can play any part, tell me what part you want. There were about five parts he was circling. Negotiations broke down because Laughlin said he had to go and make another *Beily Jack* film. So we lost Tom Laughlin.

CM: How did you feel about the casting of Courtney Love as Althea?

LK: We didn't know her as an actress but clearly the scenography was correct. When we saw her audition tapes of the final three choices for the role, we said Courtney. The studio was very nervous. My feeling was that Miles was the director



Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski

who got Louise Fletcher an Academy Award®, he can do anything he wants.

CM: Your subject matter seems so disparate —

LK: Not entirely. I remember one day I felt all my worlds were colliding when I was doing research on the Larry Flynt movie. I was checking out a *Hustler* magazine from around 1982. It must have been just at the start of the video boom because there were these ads up the back for porn videos, things like "The Forbidden Sex Series." There was one ad for this big Sex Movie — *Gim or Glad!* I felt so bad for this poor horny guy who was going to pay \$79 for an Ed Wood movie thinking that he was going to get some really hot sex movie.

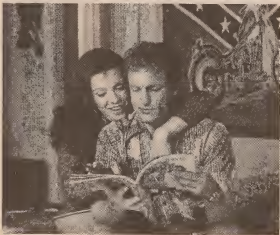
CM: You've had fairly charmed experiences with your scripts for *Ed Wood* and *Larry Flynt* yet recently with two other projects *Mars Attacks!* and *The Dots Cat* — have been more problematical.

LK: *Mars Attacks!* wasn't a negative experience. Tim Burton brought us a script that was written by someone else, and sort of resembles the movie that was made. We went through it and added a lot of humor to it. We think we made it a much better film but we had to go back to Larry Flynt so we had to leave it.

SA: We just had a scheduling problem. We couldn't stay on the movie during production. It's a shame our name is not on the film, but that's a Writers Guild Decision.

LK: That *Dave Cat* got put through the Disney factory, and a bunch of sitcom writers came in and wrote sitcom jokes. I don't look at the movie and say that's our baby, that's our work. Whereas *Ed Wood*, *Larry Flynt* they are both our vision realized, that's our work that's been put on screen.

SA: What's so baffling is the lack of rules and protocol in Hollywood. Tim Burton and Miles Forman are about as world-class as you can get, and they happily collaborated with us, our opinions were respected from day one through to the final mix and the last breaks on the final cut. But on *The Dots Cat*, there is a first-time director who never calls us up, he didn't even want to meet us. It wasn't even insulting, it was just bewildering. While a director with two best picture Oscars® happily includes us in the work process from beginning to end. You strap, that's Hollywood. Every time you think you have figured it out, you haven't. Every time is the last time. ■



Harrison and Love in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. Photo by Sidney Sidman

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What Good Is a Brain Without Eyes to See?

**The Brain of the Monster.
The Mind of the Doctor**



by Frank J. Dello Stritto

We are about to unfold the story of Frankenstein, a man of science who sought to create a man after his own image without reckoning upon God. It is one of the strangest tales ever told. It deals with the two great mysteries of creation — Life and Death.

When Universal opened 1931's *Frankenstein* with this prologue, the studio had no idea how its story of Frankenstein would unfold. Seventeen years and eight films would pass before the saga ended, and even then ambiguously. In 1948's *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*, the Monster perishes in a fire, but he had escaped that type of death in *Frankenstein, Ghost of Frankenstein* and *House of Dracula*. Dr. Frankenstein's tattered notebook, accurately but immodestly titled "The Secrets of Life and Death," is in the hands of a scientist who knows how to use it.

The Universal Frankenstein series was filmed over an entire generation, and survived changes in studio ownership, public tastes and target audience. Certainly the films declined in quality as the series progressed, but rather slowly. Each of the Universal Frankenstein films is one of the best of its type in the year it was produced. Through the Frankenstein films adapted to the times, they

maintained consistency in setting. The Frankenstein films constructed their own world and until Abbott & Costello never strayed from that neverland of a mythical turn-of-the-century Europe — central European in appearance, and a curious blend of Europe, Britain and America in customs. Through all the films, only four clues hint at their time period. The first we must ignore — the prologue of *Bride of Frankenstein* has Byron, Shelley and Mary Shelley discussing Mary's story, and thereby places the tale in the early 19th century. But later in the film Pretorius opens the tomb marked "Died 1899." Presumably it's a young grave, for, like Henry Frankenstein, Pretorius would be interested only in fresh building blocks. In *Son of Frankenstein*, we briefly see the watch of Wolf Frankenstein's assistant inscribed "September 1901." Wolf also tells us that Henry worked before the discovery of cosmic rays (therefore Wolf must have worked after their discovery), which occurred in the early 1930s. Only with Abbott & Costello does the saga move into the modern world.

Sequential narratives and consistent settings gave the Frankenstein films a depth that elude all but the great classic horror films. The characters never seem to meet for the first time — they are

always reunited. Everyone has a past, and usually a past well-known to the other characters. And so, Pretorius is able to manipulate Henry Frankenstein; Ygor does the same with both Frankenstein's sons and with Bohmer, as does Niemann with Lawrence Talbot (the Wolf Man, who joins the series in the fifth film), Dracula (who joins in the sixth) with Mooney. Revenge for past wrongs is a key to the characters of Krlog, Ygor, Niemann and Pretorius, as well as Henry's sons, Wolf and Ludwig.

The settings and character relationships stayed in the mode of the classic Gothic novel. James Twitchell, reviewing 18th century "horror" novels in his 1989 book, *Dreadful Pleasures* writes "the setting of these stories is almost always in the not-too-distant past, and the characters almost always form a family — either literally or figuratively." The films, anchored by the unaging, undying Monster, go through three generations of Frankenstein, each remembering the fates of his ancestors. Even the original Frankenstein must reckon with his own cantankerous father. "My father," Henry complains, "never believes in anyone." In the two first films, Henry is consumed by his manic drive to create life, and finds in the Monster the embodiment of his own repressed

fears and desires. In the next two sequels, his sons are torn between honoring their dead father and shielding their families from his undead creation. After the Frankenstein dies out, other doctors continued Frankenstein's quest. The last four films — the series by then aimed at juvenile audiences — each give a different slant to the doctors' motives for reviving the Monster.

A unifying element running throughout the series is the brain of the Monster. The original plot twist is well-known: Fritz, Frankenstein's assistant, is sent to steal a brain. Startled by a strange bell or gong (is this divine intervention — the hand of God as the prologue warns?), he drops the jar labeled "normal brain," and substitutes the "abnormal brain" Frankenstein unknowingly uses this brain in constructing the Monster. The brain remained a central focus throughout the series. In the sequels, the Frankenstein complain-biter of the error. The Monster receives one brain transplant, and is slated for two more that the mad doctors can not quite bring off (due in both cases to interference from the Wolf Man). Ygor's brain goes into the Monster at the end of *Ghost of Frankenstein* — again, this Dr. Frankenstein (Ludwig, Henry's second son) is deceived as to its donor. The working title of Abbott & Costello *Meet Frankenstein* was *The Brain of Frankenstein* — a fitting title for the end of the series.

"Normal" and "abnormal" applies to the brains of the doctors as well. In the eight films, 10 doctors, a werewolf, a vampire and a grave robber strive to create, revive, destroy or control the Monster. Their motives range from manic obsessions to power and wealth to freedom from curses, familial and supernatural. The states of mind of most of them are questionable. Most often, the key to their quests is the Monster's brain. Following the brain of the Monster means following the mind of the doctors.

Tracking the Monster's brain and the doctors' motives leads to the key to the series — the evolving relationship between creator and created. Through the eight Universal films, that father/son relationship veers from alternation to hostility to exploitation and all too surely to compassion. As the series progresses, the Monster must eventually share the doctors' affections, dark or otherwise, with the Wolf Man. In the last film Count Dracula displaces the mad doctor (who by then is a woman) as the father figure.

Frankenstein - 1931

Here we have one of the most perfect specimens of the human brain that has ever come to my attention at the University. And here — the abnormal brain of the typical criminal. Observe, ladies and gentlemen, the severity of convulsions on the frontal lobe, as compared to that of the normal brain. And the distinct degeneration of the middle frontal lobe. All of these degenerate characteristics check amazingly with the history of the dead man before us, whose life was one of brutality, of violence and murder.

Fritz mupsh is more than just a plot gimmick, as many writers have noted. Frankenstein as both the novel and the films does little to merit sympathy. Dr. Frankenstein (Friedrich in the films, Victor in the novel) creates the Monster, and abandons it. The doctor scarcely acknowledges his own responsibility for the Monster's unhappy existence

and only belatedly realizes his culpability for the Monster's crimes. As Andrew Tudor notes in *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, Henry's ignorance in using the criminal brain is a "way of minimizing Frankenstein's moral liability." After 1931, horror films would offer any number of mad doctors who gleefully unleash their monsters on an unsuspecting populace. The Frankenstein films have their share of them (Behmer, Nurmam, Edelman), but



not the Frankenstein themselves — always they have noble goals and always they are foiled by an unseen malevolence.

Frankenstein's realization of his error is perhaps Colin Clive's (as Henry) finest moment in the film. His best exchange with Waldman (played by Edward van Sloan) is:

Henry: It's a perfectly good brain, doctor — you ought to know, it came from your own laboratory.

Waldman: The brain that you stole from my laboratory was a criminal brain.

Henry (Henry makes a quick, involuntary glance in the direction of the Monster's cell, realizing his creation was something other than he planned, and says unconsciously): Oh, well, it's only a piece of dead tissue.

The shooting script (as published in 1969 in the *Magical Image* series of classic horror film scripts) goes much further. As written, Waldman's excited reply is:

I know now — the criminal brain that was stolen! Listen to me! The brain he stole was that of a brutal and vicious killer — hideously impressed upon it is criminality, vice — only evil can come of it. You have created a monster!

Droping this diatribe adds a good deal of ambiguity to the film. As filmed the scene begets a theme common in later horror and science fiction films: that great enterprises are brought down — that noble endeavors have terrible outcomes — through underseen errors. In a later film, *Ghost of Frankenstein*, Dr. Behmer endlessly complains of a "slight miscalculation" that cost him his career. The idea is akin to the basis of the novel *Jurassic*

Park — complex undertakings are easy prey to small blunders.

At face value, the scene also introduces something far uglier. Steven Jay Gould wrote "The Monster's Human Nature" (*Natural History* magazine, July 1994) fresh from seeing *Jurassic Park*. The essay attacks monster movies — only Frankenstein, *Isle of Frankenstein* and *Jurassic Park* are named — for "dumbing down" the subtle themes of their source material. Dr. Gould writes:

Hollywood knows only one theme in making monster movies, from the archetypal Frankenstein of 1931 to last summer's megahit, *Jurassic Park*. Human technology must not go beyond an intended order decreed by God or set by nature's laws. The latest incarnation, *Jurassic Park*, substitutes a microchip, re-created from old DNA, for Karloff's cobbled together from bits and pieces of corpses, but hardly alters the argument at all. But Karloff's Frankenstein contains an even more serious, distortion of a theme that I regard as the primary lesson of Mary Shelley's book: Why is the monster evil? the criminal brain. The monster is evil because Henry unwittingly makes him of evil stuff. Karloff's neurotically evil monster stands condemned by the same biological determinism that has so tragically and falsely restricted the lives of millions who committed no transgression besides membership in a despised race, sex, or social class.

What Gould misses is that Frankenstein does not embrace "biological determinism," but attacks it. The film's prologue warns of "without reckoning upon God," but undercuts that theme with the Monster's first appearance. The Monster, criminal brain and all, is as Mary Shelley intended, "susceptible of love and sympathy." As played by Boris Karloff, the Monster in his first appearance invokes only pity in his mute plea for understanding as his new existence. Only the Monster's physical appearance (totally Henry's doing) is terrifying. In the film, he only kills in self-defense and has only unprovoked "attack" on Henry's fiancée — which, as shall be shown, requires careful assessment. His meeting with little Maria (which ends in her accidental death) shows the Monster "capable of goodness, even with an inclination toward kindness" (Gould's description of the Monster in the novel). Ironically, Mary Shelley's novel itself contains a prologue and epilogue — the latter epilogue mentioned only at the book's beginning and end — almost identical in its message to the film's prologue.

Gould rightly tags Frankenstein and Waldman. They are blind to the Monster's true character, not because of his appearance, but because of his brain. They, like most characters in the film, accept a class stratification of humanity which permits no crossings. Thus, Baron Frankenstein, Henry's father, is contemptuous of the villagers. When he offers a toast, he gives the servants cheaper champagne, because "this stuff's wasted on them." Thus, of the Monster's first two victims, Waldman the doctor is mourned, but Fritz the lackey is immediately forgotten. Thus, Waldman never considers that destroying the Monster is murder. Thus, when Henry learns of the criminal brain, he realizes that his creation can never be one of "us," but must be one of "them." His reaction is exactly

(continued)



the same as if he had gotten one of the servant girls pregnant — the offspring is his creation, but can never be his heir. In the end, the Monster is destroyed and Henry is the hero, but the film clearly conveys that a great injustice was done. The point is driven home in the strongest scene of the film — the Monster dies screaming in the burning windmill. Director James Whale handily cuts from the Monster's pained and death cries.

In both the 1818 novel and the 1931 film, Frankenstein's creation of the Monster is linked to his wedding to Elizabeth. Victor, the novel's Frankenstein, is haunted by his indecision about the marriage. Elizabeth has been raised in his home, virtually as a member of his family. Victor's father and Elizabeth deeply desire the union, but both question Victor's feelings. "I have always looked forward to your marriage with our dear Elizabeth," writes Victor's father to his son, "You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife." Elizabeth has the same concerns, "as brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each other without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our case?" Victor never expresses his feelings, except to recount a strange dream which involves both the Monster and Elizabeth. In the novel, the Monster resolves Victor's problems — acts out Victor's darkest thoughts — by killing directly or indirectly most of Frankenstein's family, including Elizabeth.

The 1931 film, with no reference to any lifelong relationship between Henry and Elizabeth, replaces this familial tension with anxiety over gender roles. A common cliché is that men on the eve of their weddings have a last fling, doing one more thing all that doesn't married men may not do. Not Henry Frankenstein. Facing a huge wedding involving his entire village and presided over by his imperious father, he sequesters himself so as to do what no man can — he creates his own child. On the very day of Henry's engagement to Elizabeth, he tells her that he must go off to work on his experiments in secret. Four months pass before she hears from him again. No one pays much heed when Henry's father claims that his son is off with another woman. The old Baron is roughly on the right track, for what Henry is doing usually requires the female. Henry is usually proud of his "parenting." He tells Fritz, "the body I made with my own hands... my own hands!" Later he rants to

Waldman and Elizabeth, "I created it, with my own hands!" Yet as portrayed by Clive, Henry seems neither a genius possessed, nor a man playing God, but a soul in torment.

Another brilliant moment by Clive occurs just before Henry's wedding ceremony. Baron Frankenstein proposes a toast that a child, a son be born to the House of Frankenstein (phrases from the old Baron's toasts because the titles for some later films, including Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*). In obvious anguish Henry turns away as the toast is made. What is he thinking — that a "son" has already been created or that he's disclaimed to one one by convention means? Elizabeth senses some problem.

I can't get it out of my mind. Something is coming between us. I know it! I know it! If I could just get it out of my mind.

After the Monster attacks Elizabeth comes the strangest exchange in the film. Henry is about to lead the villagers to hunt down the Monster, and leaves Elizabeth with Victor Moritz, his best man for the wedding. Does Henry know, as the viewer does, that Victor loves Elizabeth? Earlier Victor tried to tell her of his feelings, but Elizabeth nipped him. Now, Henry turns to Victor.

I leave her in your care — whatever happens. You understand? In your care.

Victor clearly does not understand, and gives a very quizzical look. What does Henry mean? Henry also tells Victor:

There can be no ending while this horrible creature of mine is alive. I made him with these hands, and with these hands I'll destroy him.

Thus the torment in Henry's soul — his crisis in identity as he is about to become a "man" — will be resolved when he destroys the product of his unnatural act. He does not of course — the Monster all but kills him. The villagers save Henry and finish off the Monster. With the Monster dead, Henry returns to a normal life — at least until the first sequel.

Bride of Frankenstein - 1935

...The publishers did not see that my purpose was to write a

novel lesson of the prohibition that befell a mortal man who dared to create God.

Bride of Frankenstein, like the 1931 film and the novel, has a prologue — Byron, Shelley and Mary are discussing her novel — which again pays lip service to "biological determinism." Lord Byron himself recounts Frankenstein:

...building up a human monster so fearful, so horrible that only a half created brain could have devised!

Yet again, the film undermines its stated theme and seen shows a pitifully misunderstood creature. The only thing "so fearful, so horrible" is the mob which hunts him and the authorities that chain him in a dungeon. Meanwhile, Elizabeth continues her terrifying pronouncements of a life with Henry.

I was foretold of this. I was told to beware my wedding night, while you have been lying here losing in your delirium, I couldn't sleep and when you need of your insane desire to create living men from the dust of the dead — a strange apparition has seemed to appear in the room — it came, a figure like Death — and each time it comes more clearly, and nearer — it seems to be reaching out for you, as though it would take you away from me.

But the Monster's apparent death in the first film has resolved much of Henry's inner torment. He's far less manic in the sequel. With relative calm restored, he gives a glimpse of his ambitions, now rather typical of movie mad doctors.

Oh, what a wonderful vision it was! I dreamed of being the first to gain the world the secret that God is so jealous of — the formula for life! Think of the power — to create a race — and I did — I did it! I created a man! And who knows — in time I could have traced him to do my will — I could have bred a race and might even have found perhaps the secret of eternal life.

Even with his monster destroyed (he thinks) and his self-doubts waning, Henry remains fixated on "brooding" — perhaps in both senses of the word.

His recovery is arrested with the appearance of his one-time mentor, Dr. Pretorius. David Skell, in 1983's *The Monster Show* describes Pretorius as "a gay Mephistopheles... an over-the-top caricature of a bitchy and aging homosexual." A recent issue of *Fables in Reverse* finds him "a wildly effeminate kind of cartoon." Greg Mark in 1990's *Karliff and Lugosi seen Pretorius* meeting with Henry as "an allegory of a homosexual blackmailing." The doctor has come to lure Henry back to his dark side — literally by making monsters, figuratively by being something other than a "normal" man. Later Pretorius and the Monster abduct Elizabeth, forcing Henry's cooperation in building the Bride and also blocking his return route to "normal" life.

The tension between Frankenstein and Pretorius is a key element in *Bride of Frankenstein* — an element Universal had almost accidentally stumbled on a year earlier. In jumping 1934's *The Black Cat*, to unite its horror stars, Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, the studio needed a script with dual protagonists. The formula not only made for

exciting confrontations between strong characters, but allowed ambiguities and subtleties of motivation to be explicitly brought out. The gimmick — basically Hamlet Meets Prospero — worked so well that Universal used it in all its horror films for 1935 and 1936. Thus, *Tarzan* has Volin and *Batman*, *Werewolf of London* has Glendon and Yogan, *Invisible Ray* has Rukh and Benet and *Dracula's Daughter* has Zaleska and Sandoz. All these films depend on the chemistry between their two central characters. *Bride of Frankenstein*, with a sexual ambiguity largely lacking in those other films, raises the ploy to perfection.

The original prologue of *Bride of Frankenstein*, before it was made to echo the pseudo-message of the original film, re-enforced the perverse themes at work just beneath the surface. As scripted (again from the Maggicimage series), Mary Shelley says:

We are all three victims, sufferers at all marriages, behaving only in living fully and freely in whatever direction the heart dictates. Such an audience needs something stronger than a pretty little love story.

By 1935 standards, that declaration was strong stuff and never made it to the final cut. Nor did a number of suggestive lines of dialogue and plot elements (such as using Elizabeth's heart in making the Bride).

Even with the trimming of the script, nothing is ambiguous about the Monster's sexuality — his libido is in full bloom. Ads for the film proclaimed, "Warning: The Monster Demands a Mate!" Indeed he does. His first meeting with Preterius ends with this famous exchange:

Monster: You make man like me?



Preterius: No, a woman — friend for you.
 Monster: Woman, friend. Yes, I like friend...the Monster gently holds the skull to be used for his "bride"...Friend...Woman... (cut to extreme close-up)...Wife.

Later, when the Monster abducts Elizabeth, Preterius assures Frankenstein nothing will happen to her, "that is, except what he demands." This provocative line is in the script, but Preterius' lips are not moving when he speaks. The dialogue was dubbed in later — suggesting that Whale et al. might have been doing what they could to circumvent the studio watchdogs.

The film contains oblique references to the Monster's desires. When the manhunt begins, the Burgermeister orders, "Raise all the men you can, lock the women indoors." After the rampage, two women victims, neither seen onscreen, are found. Frau Neuman, perhaps an elderly woman, is mourning in her upstairs bedroom (when did the Monster have time for that visit?). Frieda, a young girl, is found in the bushes near a convent school (ditto?). The Monster's only onscreen encounter with a woman, other than Elizabeth and his Bride, occurs very early in the film when he saves a shepherdess from drowning. She sees her rescuer, screams wildly, and the Monster flees the hunters who come to aid her. His actions seem perfectly innocent, but given the Monster's later attacks on women, perhaps the shepherdess acted wisely.

Any notion that the Monster selectively preys on women is muted, but a casualty count shows that, though women are locked in while men hunt him, the Monster has as many female victims as male. Basically, the Monster defends himself from men and attacks women. The suggestion of the Monster as sexual predator began unwittingly with the original 1931 film. The studio removed the scene of little Maria's drowning. As filmed, the Monster plays with her, and innocently tosses her in a pond. After editing the scene ends as the Monster reaches for the girl. When next seen, she is dead. Her skirt is above her thighs; one knee-length sock is soiled but intact, the other is crumpled down to her ankle. Whether her death was accidental or intentional — whether anything

more than her death is involved — is left entirely to the viewer. Moments later, the Monster breaks into Elizabeth's room. She cannot escape because Henry had earlier locked her bedroom door. Whatever occurs is off screen, but he leaves her semi-conscious and moaning. Later, in *Bride of Frankenstein*, the Monster visits her room again to abduct her.

Bride of Frankenstein never references the Monster's criminal brain: the only brain mentioned in the film is the Bride's. Her brain is the exact opposite of the Monster's — no genetic history, no former life, no association with an whatsoever. Preterius describes her brain's creation:

I used for my material the source of life. I grew my creature like cultures. Grew them as nature does from seed. I have created by my method a perfect human brain, already alive but dormant. As I'll explain, Henry, that lying here within this skull is an artificially developed human brain. Each cell, each convolution ready, waiting for life to come.

Bride of Frankenstein is awash with images of Christ and crucifixion — and here is a truly immaculate conception. The contrast in brains is reminiscent of 1933's contrast in Kongs. Racial interpretations of Kong Kong (white adventures go to an island of blacks, enslave their god, leaving their village in ruins) did not get much attention until the 1960's. But the makers of Kong Kong covered — or accused — themselves, unwittingly or not, by making Son of Kong a white ape. So Whale et al. hedge their bets on the criminal brain, now with politically incorrect inferences. The Bride's brain is metaphysically innocent. The makers of *Bride of Frankenstein* may have appreciated the irony, but it's doubtful even they foresaw that the Monster's brain would remain a creepy symbol in six more Frankenstein movies, cleverly exploiting the gimmick for the next 13 years. Those six films would pass before the Monster took his next female victim, for that exploitation steered the series toward less provocative themes.

(continued)



Son of Frankenstein - 1939

It wasn't my father's fault that the being he created became a senseless, murderous monster. He was right. You understand that, don't you dear? He was right. It was the unforeseen blunder of a stupid assistant that gave his creation the brain of a killer instead of a normal one. Hah! How my father was made to suffer for that mistake. His name has become synonymous with horror and monsters. Why 9 out of 10 people call that monstrous creature of my father's experiments

Frankenstein and Bride of Frankenstein revolve around Henry's inner anguish. The next two films of the series focus on the hidden torments his sons. But first *Son of Frankenstein* quickly summarizes the fate of Henry (now called "Heinrich," for the third film adds a charming German note to everything). Henry died in his manor a few years after the supposed destruction of his Monster. His son, Wolf, was too young to remember. A later film reveals that Elizabeth actually bore two sons. Henry and his father, the old Baron, are entombed in a secret vault, hidden perhaps from desecrators. Yet "Maker of Monsters" is etched on the doctor's tomb. The villagers grew to hate and curse him, and Henry died a tormented, bitter man. Wolf was raised in England by Elizabeth, who told him her version of Henry and the Monster, and obviously impressed on him the tale of the "criminal brain." Decades later Wolf returns to his ancestral home with wife Ellen and son Peter. The Burgemeister details:

He'll find no friends here. Nothing but locked doors and darkened windows. Locked hearts and bitter hatred. Let that be part of the Frankenstein heritage.

But Wolf has another heritage, passed on by his father in a letter at long last delivered:

My son, herein you will find my faiths, my beliefs and my confessions, a complete diary of my experiments, charts and secret formulas. In short, the sum total of my knowledge, such as it is. Perhaps you will regard my work with ridicule, or

even with derision. If so, destroy these records. But if you like me, burn with the irresistible desire to penetrate the unknown, carry on. Even though the path is cruel and tortuous, carry on. Like every seeker after truth you will be hated, misunderstood and condemned. But perhaps what I have failed, you will succeed. You have inherited the fortune of the Frankenstein. I trust you will not have inherited their fate.

That diary of experiments became a staple of the series, and appears in all but one of the Frankenstein films to follow. The letter shows not only Henry's bitterness, but also that oft overlooked side of his character, the dreamer in an almost forgotten scene in the original 1931 film, Henry lectures his mentor:

Dangerous? Poor, old Waldheim. Have you never wanted to do anything that was dangerous? Where should we be if nobody tried to find out what lies beyond? You never wanted to look beyond the clouds and the stars? Or to know what causes the trees to bud and know what changes a darkness into light? But if you talk like that people call you crazy. Well, if I could discover just one of those things — what eternity is, for example, I wouldn't care if they did think I was crazy.

Wolf does indeed burn with his father's ambition, as well as with a need both to restore his father's name and to prove himself worthy of it. The centerpiece of *Son of Frankenstein* as Wolf's crisis of loyalties. To whom does he owe allegiance — the tormented father he never knew or the troubled, unsupportable people of the village which bears his name? At the film's finale these forces converge on Wolf's own son, Peter, and throughout the film two dark angels, Krogh and Ygor, hover over Wolf. Each has been mutilated by one of the opposing forces tugging at Wolf. Krogh, the local police inspector, lost his arm as a boy when attacked by the Monster (and thus indirectly by Henry). The Inspector, though civil, despises the Frankenstein and subtly sees in Wolf:

a violent, fatal poison. You're passed already — by your name. You might change your name — but you can't erase the brand, that's inevitable.

Ygor, a blacksmith hung for grave-robbing, survived with a becken neck. Scorned by the villagers, he alone lived on the Frankenstein estate during its years of desecration. But not quite alone, for the Monster too survived his apparent death and now lies dormant in the hidden crypt of Henry and the old Baron. Like Krogh, Ygor quickly senses the "violent poison," and leads him to the Monster's resting place. Ygor asks that his friend, the Monster, be released. When Wolf wavers, Ygor plays on familial loyalties:

Your father made him live for always, but now he's sick. Make him well, Frankenstein.

Wolf: I don't know whether I
Ygor: Your father made him, and Heinrich Frankenstein was your father too.

Wolf: You mean to imply then that that is my brother?

Ygor: But his mother was lightning.
Wolf: Oh, electricity, we'll see.

Biologically, Henry is the Monster's mother, but the series begins here to guide the saga away from its sordid origins. Did Wolf ever consider that he may be looking not at a brother, but at a father? In both previous films, the Monster had ample opportunities with Elizabeth while Henry fretted. Wolf looks nothing like his father, but has more than a passing resemblance to Victor Moritz, who had his own opportunities with Elizabeth. But such musings are quite forced for *Son of Frankenstein*. Wolf's loyalty, not Henry's sexuality, are the focus of the film.

Wolf undertakes to revive the Monster, but first gives him his only recorded medical examination. The Monster's blood pressure and heart rate are 3 times those of normal humans, his blood is a maraculous tissue, in which "the cells seem to be boiling over another, as if they had a conscious life of their own." On the brain and mental state, Wolf coldly notes:

Evidence of trauma, exactly the same as a human being. Eyes contracted, muscular atrophy, mental abnormality. Considerable ostoderness in the frontal region.

Wolf sums up his findings in a Hamlet-like soliloquy — and Basil Rathbone in an overlooked moment of great acting delivers the dialogue as if he were playing Shakespeare. Again, Wolf heaps on that hated criminal brain.

This creature is violent a monster. There's not one part of his physical being that is like that of human beings. From his warped brain down to the thinnest atomistic tissue cell of his huge carcass, he's unrecognizable. Every fantastic story told of him by the people of Frankenstein I now believe to be absolutely true. I am a man should destroy him. But as a scientist I should do everything in my power to bring him back to conscious life, so that the world can study his abnormal functions. That would vindicate my father, and his name would be exalted among the mortals.

Wolff has temporarily resolved his doubts. He claims to be acting "as a scientist," but he isn't the loyal son, and has put aside his responsibilities "as a man." *Time Magazine* (April 26, 1996), in writing of the *Usualer* case and the Kaczynski brothers, sums up the eternal dilemma: "When should the bonds of family give way to the obligations to society? And... can anyone be sure that an apparent act of principle isn't also over so slightly a subtle act of retaliation?"

See of Frankenstein's first hold is mostly talk about the Monster, while the creature himself has no voice. Wolff reduces him to clinical summaries; Krogh gives dispassionate but vivid descriptions of his atrocities; Ygor gives passionate but vague accounts of his friend's nocturnal doings. All these disavow when the Monster at last awakens. The conventional wisdom is that Boris Karloff is overshadowed by his costars in the film. Indeed, Rathbone, Lionel Atwill (as Krogh) and Lugosi (as Ygor) give beautiful performances, and each has delivered at least one classic monologue before Karloff, with no lines at all, even reverts. Yet Karloff strikes exactly the right chord as a confused, disoriented soul. Certainly the Monster shows all the signs of brain damage that Wolff has duly noted. Even after reversion, the Monster spends most of his time sleeping, and only Ygor's death shocks him into action. In their first scene together Lugosi seems to be stealing the show from Karloff, but just as many eyes are on Karloff's empty, uncomprehending stare. Irresistible film historians often describe the scene as Lugosi's upstaging Karloff. Actually, it's a superb collaboration between the two actors.

Karloff's most effective scene comes when the Monster discovers Ygor's dead body and flies into a rage. He destroys the laboratory, and only recovers himself when he finds the child's storybook that young Peter Frankenstein has given him. About two years later, the scene was repeated by Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*. Kane goes on a destructive tantrum on learning that his wife has left him, and only calms down when he stumbles onto the snowglobe and utters the immortal "Rosebud." Play the two scenes side-by-side—Karloff's is more convincing. The moment is also the last really moving scene the Monster has in the series. Thereafter, he increasingly becomes a robot.

With the Monster reformed, Wolff indeed repeats his father's mistake. That mistake was never using the "wrong brain"; but rather a truly "violent power"—utterly failing to recognize the Monster's need for human contact and compassion. At one point Wolff marvels Ygor's influence over the Monster.

It's amazing the control he exercises over that thing. It's hypnotic, or something more elemental perhaps. He's dangerous of course, but he loves Ygor and obeys him. My problem is how to make Ygor obey me.

Wolff's real problem is his total blindness—drilled into him by his mother and his own "class" view of the world—as to "that thing's" true nature. Ironically, the villagers view Wolf in the same way, and their hatred is about all Wolf and the Monster share.

As filmed *Son of Frankenstein* is nothing like the script (again, reference the *Magical Image* series).

The script recaps of *Son of Frankenstein*, and has the Monster emerge a generation later still talking and still demanding a friend. A rather grisly tale follows in which the Monster abducts Frankenstein's son. Some sketches of the basic script survive and some appear in *Ghost of Frankenstein*, but basically the original plot was scrapped. Director Rowland V. Lee and the four co-stars rebuilt the movie as it was being made. All the actors came out incredible scenes for themselves. Lugosi finally got to play Rasputin, a role MGM denied him a few years earlier (Ygor's appearance is quite suggestive of the mad monk); and Karloff removed the Monster's dialogue, which he thought a mistake in the previous film.

And the identity crisis of Henry is replaced by the moral crisis of Wolf. Pulled in opposing directions by Krogh, Ygor, the Monster, Elsa and the haunting memory of his father, Wolf's character seems near disintegrating—a magnificent acting by Rathbone in a difficult role. Only when the Monster abducts young Peter—only when Wolf, who never had a chance to be a son, is forced to save his own son—does Wolf discard his doubts and destroy the Monster. Once again, the apparent death of the Monster restores a Frankenstein to "normalcy." But the haunting legacy of the father would continue in the next film.

Ghost of Frankenstein - 1942

Ghost: My son, what are you about to do? Would you destroy that which I, your father, dedicated his life to creating?

Ludwig: I must. The Monster you created is in itself destruction.

Ghost: Nevertheless, I was near to solving a problem that has baffled man since the beginning of time—the secret of life, artificially created.

Ludwig: But it's brought death to everything it's touched.

Ghost: That is because I unknowingly gave it a criminal brain. With your knowledge of science, you can cure that.

Ludwig: It's beyond my cure. It's a malignant brain.

Ghost: What if it had another brain?

Ludwig: Another brain!

Ghost of Frankenstein is almost a low-budget remake of *Son of Frankenstein*. Again, a son of Henry Frankenstein is confronted by the Monster, Ygor and quite literally the specter of Henry. Again, the son is torn between his duties to his community and to his father. The notebooks of Henry still beckon to be read. Again, the key scene is lifted from *Hamlet*—not Wolf's soliloquy of whether the Monster is to be or not to be, but now a visitation by a father's ghost, dispensing advice for setting past wrongs. Yet the character relationships and dynamics are so changed that this film does not mimic *Son of Frankenstein*. Though *Ghost of Frankenstein* is definitely a studio production and lacks the distinct visions of the earlier films, it is a fresh perspective on the curse Henry bequeathed to his sons.

Whereas Wolf returned to the homestead seeking adventure and mystery, Ludwig has clonned himself in far off Vienna (a later film reveals that the two villages are about 100 miles apart) He

is hardly incongruous, for he is prosperous, has kept the family name, and is known to the villagers as "the one who heals those who are sick in mind." When first son Ludwig is on the brink of a great breakthrough, "Think of it," says his assistant Kettering, "the first time the human brain has been removed from the skull, subjected to surgery and then replaced." Ludwig is perhaps helped in his researches by his father's and brother's notebooks, which he hides in his study (why else have all that electrical equipment at hand?). Otherwise, he seems all connections with his family and shelter has given daughter from that past.

Ever since the day my father put life into that creature it has been a curse. The terrible consequences killed my father and drove my brother into exile. The Monster shall not raise my life.

Unlike Henry and Wolf, who were both thirty-something when they encountered the Monster, Ludwig is at least in his fifties. More than Henry and Wolf, Ludwig by virtue of his age stands as parent to the Monster. Lon Chaney, Jr., obviously younger than Karloff ever was as the role, plays the Monster as an alienated son, alternately rebellious and indifferent.

He's more dangerous today than he ever was before. Besides his sick mind, he has a sick body. You can make him well, Frankenstein.

In *Son of Frankenstein* the Monster was totally in Ygor's control. Not so in this film. While tugging from Frankenstein to Vienna, the Monster agrees his mentor, first to get a jolt of lightning, then to befrend a young girl, Clostine, and casually kill two men who try to retrieve her. Against Ygor's pleas he just as casually kills Kettering. Throughout the film, the Monster does exactly and exasperates his two father figures, Ygor and Ludwig. To Ygor, the Monster is indeed "more dangerous today than he ever was before." The Frankenstein's never had a kind word for this wayward relation, and Ludwig is no different. "A homicidal maniac," deems the doctor, "that human junk heap." Ludwig only wants to destroy the Monster once and for all, until Henry's ghost suggests the new brain.

Whose brain? Ludwig intends to use Kettering's, Ygor believes his own, and the rebellious "son" wants Clostine's, for reasons never quite made clear. Ygor prevails, because again a dark force hovers near Frankenstein. Dr. Bohmer is a poor man's (or perhaps, a straight man's) Prometheus. He was once Frankenstein's mentor (though Ludwig appears the older by at least 10 years), and is now an assistant. His career in brain surgery was ruined by "a slight miscalculation" whose "magic consequences" are never explained. Bohmer has brooded ever since and watched in bitter silence as Frankenstein rose to surpass him (judged perhaps by Henry's notes). Such a man is easy prey for Ygor.

So, you're going to let Frankenstein do this operation, to put the brain of his friend into our friend, Yon, the great Dr. Bohmer, who taught Frankenstein everything he knows. How could you like to be the leader of your profession in this state? The head of the medical commission? The

(continue)



regent of the University? You see to it that the brain of Kettering does not go into the head of the Monster. My brain will go into it. Die? I will live again. Only this crooked body will die. I will live forever. My brain is that body would make me a leader of men. We would rule the state, and even the whole country. You'll do as I say, and you can have everything you want.

Ghost of Frankenstein began filming one week after America's entry into World War II, and the political allusions of Ygor's monologue must have been obvious. They were certainly obvious to the studio publicists who in pressbooks liken the Monster to Nazi Germany. Apparently, *Universal* cared little about what the Monster truly represented. A more eerie allusion to the war is the film's "gas chamber" sequences — *Frankenstein* first subdues the Monster by releasing poisonous gas, later the Monster and Bohmer do the same to the rampaging villagers. Of course, in late 1941, few Americans suspected that genocide was underway in Europe, so the plot element is no more than incredible coincidence.

The operation progresses with patient (the Monster), doctor (Frankenstein) and donor (Ygor) each believing that a different brain is involved.

Kettering's brain — what will he think when he awakes life in that body. Will he think as he finding him a new lease on life, or will he object to giving his ego living in that human junk heap. I have replaced an evil brain with a good one. I have made amends for the great tragedy that my father and my brother accidentally brought to this community. I have restored the good name of Frankenstein.

Bohmer and Ygor are only briefly triumphant. Due to a mismatch in bloodtypes the Monster's "blood will not feed the sensory nerves." Henry was hardly concerned with matching bloodtypes when he built the Monster. Perhaps bathing the

construction in cosmic rays eased such fine points. Of the Monster's body, only Ygor's brain has not been through that experience. The Monster goes blind, screaming in Ygor's voice.

What good is a brain without eyes to see? What good is a brain without eyes to see?

He kills Bohmer and sets off an explosion and fire that destroy him and Ludwig.

The "criminal brain" was now gone. Undoubtedly Ludwig just tossed it in the trash. The saga of the Monster would continue, but the story of the poor soul that Henry brought to life ends in *Ghost of Frankenstein*. Much later Count Dracula will briefly allude to the criminal brain, but otherwise it is never mentioned again. The next film barely mentions brains at all.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man - 1943

Major of Vuesia: Haven't we tried before to get rid of the Monster by force? We burned down the sanatorium, and yet we still didn't destroy Frankenstein's fiendish creation. We must be more clever this time. Let's use our brains for once.

Denkoper: Whose brains? Yours?

James Twitchell writes in *Dreadful Pleasures* that after *Ghost of Frankenstein* the Monster is "mostly just defrosted" and Universal "turned to their subject with ridicule because they have nothing new to say." The studio had carried the series through *Son of Frankenstein* and *Ghost of Frankenstein* in part by dividing the Monster's character into two roles — the Monster itself and his mentor Ygor. The gimmick worked so well in *Son of Frankenstein* because Karloff and Lugosi, as always, knew exactly how to play off each other. Karloff's Monster is pathetic; Lugosi's Ygor is magnetic, both are classic portrayals. Such chemistry is never

quite achieved in *Ghost of Frankenstein* mostly due to Lon Chaney's leaden performance as the Monster. He seems unable to move his facial muscles under the makeup, and hardly breaks out of a deadpan stare. Quite appropriately, Chaney's best scene by far is the film's finale, when the Monster, with Ygor's brain, speaks with Lugosi's dubbed voice. A poetic touch that the two characters physically merge.

As filmed, the poetry continues in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*. The Monster, now played by Lugosi himself, is still blind, still speaking in Ygor's voice and still dreaming of power and life everlasting. Late in the production, the studio abandoned the notion of a blind, talking Monster. Editing reduced the Monster's screen time drastically, and the film became little more than a sequel to *The Wolf Man* and a vehicle for its star, the ubiquitous Chaney. Chaney's shortcomings in *Ghost of Frankenstein* are more than atoned for here. He gives a compelling performance that holds the mangled plotline together. In essence, the original confrontations between the Monster and the doctor in *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* — replaced in *Son of Frankenstein* and *Ghost of Frankenstein* by confrontations between Ygor and the doctor — now are between the Wolf Man and the doctor. The dynamics between the characters evolve with each change in the doctor's adversary. In the first two films Henry Frankenstein confronts in the Monster his other self. In the sequels Wolf and Ludwig find in Ygor their father's specter (themselves might differ, but Ygor and Henry always agree on what the boys should do). Chaney, as the Wolf Man, continues what the actor began as the Monster in *Ghost of Frankenstein* — the rebellious son. The Monster himself was pushed for the remainder of the series into the background.

The film is half over before the Monster appears, and the Frankenstein legend is quickly and rather clumsily dispensed. Ludwig's daughter Elsa, the last of the Frankenstein, recounts the horror:

My father was a great scientist, but all he created brought misfortune. I saw my father become obsessed by his power. He died a horrible death, just as my grandfather did.

Universal revised history a bit — the villages of Vuesia and Frankenstein are now forever melded into one, as are the three doctors Frankenstein. Elsa mentions a grandfather (Henry is never mentioned by name), but the clear impression is that her father (not as Ludwig mentioned) actually built the Monster. Within the context of the film, her father appears to be the author of the diary, now titled "The Secret of Life and Death."

I can't do it! I can't destroy Frankenstein's creation. I have got to see him at his full power!

What drives this film's doctor, Frank Manning (a cute touch that his name is a composite of the film's two monsters)? Why does he revive the Monster against all sane logic and all the plodding of Elsa and the Vuesians? The most likely reason is boredom. At the story's opening, Manning is running a quiet hospital in Cardiff, whose only patient seems to be Lawrence Talbot,

an amnesiac claiming that he turns into a wolf. Talbot can hardly pay a hospital bill, yet he has a dedicated doctor, two nurses, attendants on call to strap-patch him, and a room the size of a gymnasium. And Mannering has time on his hands. The doctor ignores whatever practice he has, first to visit Talbot's village to check the patient's history and then, when the Wolf Man escapes, to track him across Europe. Mannering over-keeps his man in Vienna, where Talbot hopes that Frankenstein's secrets can break the werewolf curse. Mannering is immediately mesmerized on seeing the Monster. Though the doctor promises to use Frankenstein's diaries to destroy the Monster and the Wolf Man, we know immediately he'll do otherwise.

If Dr. Mannering is entranced by the Monster, he's almost the only one — Bela Lugosi's performance is the most maligned of the series. Yet, in what finally reaches the screen, Lugosi is cuffed on to do little as the Monster, and does it well enough. There is more acting in his brief role than in all of Chaney's far larger part in the previous film and in Glen Strange's three appearances in the films that follow. Conventional wisdom is that Lugosi was simply too old for the physical demands of the role. He turned 60 during filming — Karloff was 51 when he last played the part, Chaney 35, Seitz 37, Eddie Parker, then 41, doubled for Lugosi in the strenuous scenes. Yet as scripted, the Monster, when released from the ice, is very weak, almost dead. Lugosi's performance is not meant to project physical strength. He does not look comfortable in the part, but as David Skal notes in *The Monster Show*, the Monster's appearance is based on cunning, subtle distortions of Karloff's own features. No other actor — not Chaney, not Strange, and least of all Lugosi — ever looked quite right in the makeup. Since editing removed all misfires to the Monster's blandness, Lugosi's groping and stumbling are confusing, but that is certainly not the actor's fault.

Judging Lugosi's acting is impossible, since most of his screen time and all of his character's motivation were discarded. The edited footage has not been seen for more than a half century and apparently no longer exists. Yet film historians born long after the footage disappeared critique the original performance nevertheless. Greg Mark, writing the notes for the MCA/Universal edition of the script, describes the performance as "sincere but weak," and opines that Lugosi delivered "his monster dialogue as fervently as he had played Romeo on the Hungarian stage." Mark further writes that during production "it was quickly obvious to all that Lugosi's casting as the Monster was a grievous mistake." With one exception, no one involved in the production has ever voiced that opinion. In *Universal Horrors*, Tom Weaver and the Brunas brothers between "Lugosi's already shaky performance" before the editing: "the film worked well until Lugosi's Monster first opened his mouth, and the sheer lack of cohesiveness of the talkative monster finally struck..." All this without viewing the scenes.

Who did view them? The production as filmed was screened only once. Before that no one expressed reservations over Lugosi's performance, but someone powerful — perhaps producer George Wagner, perhaps someone above him — found the Monster's dialogue ridiculous. Everyone followed the boss' lead. The competition of

who could laugh the loudest that day must have been quite a spectacle, as must have been the scurrying afterward: "Producer George Wagner, suddenly running scared," wrote Weaver at it, "ordered all of the Monster's dialogue scenes removed from the film." Mark writes "Wagner was terrified that 'the best battle of the century' would reap laughs."

Mark's and Weaver & Brunas' accounts of what happened that day are based solely on the testimony of the man who wrote the dialogue, Curt Siodmak. Was it bad acting or bad writing?



Siodmak's recollections are totally self-serving, and his lambasting of Lugosi ("a pest," "couldn't talk," "couldn't act his way out of a paper bag," "a Monster with a Hungarian accent") in interviews hardly makes his motives less suspect. Siodmak is one of the great creative forces of 1940s horror films. James Twitchell goes so far as to claim that Siodmak did for the werewolf what Bram Stoker did for the vampire. Naturally Mark, Weaver, the Brunas and a generation of film historians hang on Siodmak's every word. But I cannot accept the "dialogue." Siodmak now feeds his characters without hearing the dialogue he wrote in 1942. Until then I must wonder if George Wagner was not the only one who left that screening room "running scared."

Without the missing footage, debate is useless, but Weaver et al. concede that "...aside from being funny, these scenes quite obviously...allowed the action and weakened the film's suspense." When Mark looks at what's left of the film, he admits that Lugosi's Monster "does have its moments...Indeed, after watching Lugosi's performance...one does not feel scorn for the performance as much as pity for the actor."

House of Frankenstein - 1944

I'm going to repay you for betraying me. I'm going to give that brain of yours a new home — in the skull of the Frankenstein Monster. As for you, Strauss, I'm going to give you the brain of the Wolf Man, so that all your ticking hours will be spent in wild agony awaiting the fall of the moon which will change you into a werewolf! Talbot's body is the perfect home for the Monster's brain, which I'll add to and subtract from in my experiments.

House of Frankenstein returns the series to a location on terra, and introduces its maddest doctor, Gustav Niemann. Niemann's brother worked with a Frankenstein and passed on enough of the secrets to unhinge Gustav's own rather unwary mind:

This brave, if taken from the man and transplanted into the skull of a dog, would give him the mind of a human being. Now, Frankenstein would have severed the spinal cord here — but I'm not certain he was right. His gene life is a body that he made from parts of other bodies that had died. If I had Frankenstein's records to guide me...

After a brief encounter with Dracula, Niemann and his assistant Daniel go to the village of Frankenstein to recover the doctor's records from the ruins of his laboratory. The renaissance that began in the previous film is now complete — all that transpired in Vienna in *Ghost of Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* has actually happened in Frankenstein, and Vienna is now the home of Niemann.

Vienna — that's a town that doesn't care for horrors. They had one of their own seen 15 years ago, when a Dr. Niemann tried to give a dog the mind of a human being. They threw him in prison because he, like Frankenstein, used bodies of the newly dead to carry on his work.

In Frankenstein's castle, Niemann and Daniel find Henry's diary, rebuffed "Experiments in Life & Death," and also find the Monster and the Wolf Man trapped in it. The Monster quite literally spends most of the movie defeating. Only in the climax does he rise from the operating table, but soon meets death, with Niemann, in quickened Lawrence Talbot, protected by his supernatural cause, emerges from the scintilla. Also intact is Talbot's persona as an impatient child. Chaney gives perhaps his strongest performance in this film, but his dialogue reduces to "Are we there yet, Daddy? Are we there yet, Daddy?"

If Niemann is a father figure — and Karloff in an interesting performance certainly plays him that way — he's a terribly abusive one. The character veers between charming, compassion and soulless cruelty. He envisions the trust of Talbot and Daniel, and betrays them both, all in the service of a thirst for revenge and an obsession to be another Frankenstein. Just how mad is he? Is he a genius or a quack? His crazy scheme to transplant a human brain into a dog apparently never succeeded. On his dungeon walls, he has scrawled simplistic pictures of that experiment, as well as a host of chemical symbols. The symbols are basic organic chemistry, hardly the secrets necessary to create life. His planned revenge against his old assistant Strauss (gutting the Wolf Man's brain into Strauss' body) will hardly punish Strauss at all — it will just give Talbot another body. In the end, the only thing that Niemann does successfully is pour some electricity into the Monster's body to briefly revive him.

Talbot and Daniel, the two "sons" of the movie, rarely share a scene and never exchange dialogue. But the tension between them (and the performances of the stars) raises *House of Frankenstein* above a monster fest. Talbot is big, worldly, rugged; Daniel is deformed, pathetic and dependent. Yet both long "to be like other men"; both love the

(Continued)



gy pey girl flooka, both vie for the attention of the father figure, Niemann. Niemann's betrayal of Darsel is particularly tragic, for Darsel has been blindly devoted to him, even calling him "master." For Talbot the betrayal was but the third that a father/doctor dealt him. In *The Wolf Man* (1941) John Talbot refuses to believe or console his son, that Mooninging forgets all promises and ignores him, Niemann intends only to exploit him. In the next film, the Wolf Man finally meets a "father" who would help.

House of Dracula - 1945

Edelman: Frankenstein's creation is man's challenge to the laws of life and death. He was made bit by bit, piece by piece. The undying Monster! The triumphant climax of Frankenstein's genius. The heart that Frankenstein gave him never died. The spark of life is there, waiting to be revived.

Talbot: Dr. Edelman, this thing destroyed Frankenstein. It has brought death to all those who tried to follow in his footsteps.

Edelman: Is this poor creature responsible for what he is?

Talbot: It's a thing of violence, to whom death would be a merciful release.

Edelman: Is man to sit in judgment over life and death?

Nina: The evil he creates he can also destroy. Think what your doctor, doctor, To bring him back again would unleash worse than murder upon humanity.

Edelman: That would be murder. That helplessness by man's responsibility.

Nina: Man's first responsibility is to man.

Only after seven films and four generations of doctors does the Monster at last find one who understands the patient's needs. And in all that time, the enormous myth of the Monster as evil incarnate persists, even with Lawrence Talbot, who should know better. Ever since the Frankenstein

line died out and the brain damage overtook the once-caring mind of Ygor, the Monster has only been a catalyst for, and a temptation to, the evil within the doctors themselves.

House of Dracula is the simple monster rearm that House of Frankenstein would have been had it not elevated by the startling performances of its stars. Yet buried in this hastily made, hastily paced sequel, again set in Vlasia, is a unique view of a doctor driven to revive the Monster, and a poetic ending to the saga of Lawrence Talbot. It might have been a classic had the film makers only had the time and budget to bring some of the story's aspects to their full potential.

Frank Edelman is a brilliant physician, dispensing miraculous cures to all corners. They include Count Dracula and Lawrence Talbot, seeking release from their curses, and Frankenstein's Monster. "All these years" after the Monster sank into quiescence, the shifting earths deposit him, still clutching Niemann's skeleton, in a cave beneath Edelman's mansion. When buried for long periods, as he was three times before—once in a sulfur pit and twice in ice—the Monster reverts to a hibernation state which leaves him quite weakened on release. Edelman's decision is to revive him or not. Auding Edelman is again a deflected assistant, but this time the assistant is, except for her curved spine, a beautiful woman. Nina is the embodiment of unselfish virtue, ever ready to correct Edelman when he strays from the path of goodness.

The utopia of Edelman's clinic/castle is toppled by Dracula. The vampire infects Edelman with his blood. Edelman destroys Dracula, but the doctor's dark side has been unleashed. From this point on, the plot owes more to Jekyll & Hyde than to any of the Frankenstein films. Where does Edelman's evil come from—was it lurking within Edelman all along or was it implanted by Dracula? That question is unresolved, but some clue lies in the doctor's nightmare. Edelman dreams of reviving the Monster—when he then finds on a ramp of killing, of Nina emerging from surgery a perfect

beauty—whom he then strangles. All the images of the dream are from Edelman's earlier dreams, only the outcomes are changed. Dr. Jekyll had similar visions in both preceding Hollywood versions (1932 and 1941) of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde.

Prior to Edelman's transformation, the doctor had given both Dracula and the Wolf Man their only known medical exams. Not surprisingly, Dracula's affliction is traced to an abnormality of the blood. We then learn that Lawrence Talbot has something akin to the cerebral bleed.

The examination discloses one condition—pressure upon certain parts of the brain. This condition, coupled with your belief that the moon can bring about a change, accomplishes exactly that. During the period in which your reasoning processes give way to self-agony, the glands which govern your metabolism get out of control, like a steam engine without a fly wheel. When this happens, the glands generate an abnormal supply of certain hormones—in your case those which bring about the transformation you experience.

Edelman and Talbot form a father/son bond, and Edelman even jokes to calling Talbot "my boy." The doctor performs the necessary surgery to reshape Talbot's skull, and the curse is broken. But Talbot has yet to pay the full price for release. Talbot witnesses Edelman, in a fit of madness, killing a villager. Should Talbot inform on the murderer, or protect his surrogate father? Finally, Talbot must kill Edelman, who becomes totally possessed by his civil insanity. Goshwade flickers on Edelman's face as he dies—the redeemed son has redeemed his father. Thus ends the saga of Lawrence Talbot—which is really a search by an erring son for a caring father. The onset of Talbot's curse (in *The Wolf Man*) coincides with his failure to please his own father. John Talbot even destroys the monster/son in *The Wolf Man's* finale, and dies of grief shortly afterwards. In three successive Frankenstein films, the rewarred Lawrence searches for salvation from his curse (his guilt over his father's death?), always focusing his hopes on a doctor/father that might save him. He finds one at last, but like John the father, Lawrence the son is forced to kill the adored one who becomes a murderer.

Such a finale might have capped the Monster's story. His mortal plight, familial drama, really ended with *House of Frankenstein*. After that film, Universal assigned the pathos and depth of character to the Wolf Man. In *House of Dracula*, as in the two previous films, the Monster comes to life only as the closing scenes to meet a fiery or watery death. The Monster is so dehumanized and pathetic in the last three Frankenstein films that only the most alert viewers recall that the brain within that skull is wily Ygor's. Of the Monster's body, only that brain does not go through Henry's surgical creation process. Perhaps Ygor's brain is not endowed with the same powers as the rest of the body. Success at freezing and thawing, hibernation and resuscitation have reduced the once nimble mind to a subhuman intellect. Only the most powerful master of mind control could ever hope to manipulate that dying brain.

Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein - 1948

And about the brain? I do not want to repeat

Frankenstein's mistake and *renew* a second, unmanageable brute. This time the Monster must have no say of his own. No Jewish intellect to oppose his master.

House of Frankenstein and *House of Dracula* never integrate the vampire into the Monster's saga, and Dracula never shares a scene with him. In those two films, Dracula's total screen time with the Wolf Man is literally about one second (Dracula as fleeing as Lawrence Talbot enters). As Weaver et al. describe the plot arrangements, Dracula is the "warm up act"; the Monster is the closing act, and most of the show is carried by the Wolf Man, the mad doctor and the deformed assistant. Perhaps only in comedy would screenwriters dare introduce a quite ingenious element—in Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein, Dracula is in effect the mad doctor. He has a cohort, the alluring Sandra Moray, to actually wield the scalpel, but Dracula's plan to revive the Monster drives the plot. Thwarting the vampire is Lawrence Talbot, aided by the equally alluring Abbott & Costello. Like all his "deaths" in previous films, the Wolf Man's cure as *House of Dracula* is temporary, but he has found a social conscience and is fighting to end the evil of the vampire.

Dracula's and the Wolf Man's battleground is the Monster's body and Wilbur's (Costello's) brain. Dracula wants to unite the two because, as Moray says of Wilbur:

The new brain I've chosen for the Monster is so simple, no pliable he will obey you like a trained dog

Or as Wilbur succinctly puts it:

Sandra as gorilla use my brain to make a bigger dummy outta the other dummy.

Thus the wonderful farce continually veers between the hilarious absurdity of the comedians and the poetic absurdity of the monsters. The film works because its two halves play off each other throughout and unite in a rousing finale. By the late 1940's, both the routines of Abbott & Costello and the "routines" of the monsters (the transformations, the nocturnal prowling) had worn thin, but Costello's sputtering fear seems quite appropriate when it's the monsters scaring him. The clumsy lumbering of the Monster is more threatening when the comedians are the prey. Strip away such obligatory scenes, and what remains is a very tight film which efficiently prepares the characters and the viewers for the climax. That climax is an action-packed masterpiece of editing, cutting between six major characters.

Perhaps the most intriguing element of the film is the obvious and frequent parallels drawn between the comedians and the monsters. Three times in the film a scene with Abbott & Costello is followed by a scene with Dracula and the Monster in similar poses and situations. Twice Wilbur has a scene with Chic (Abbott) and then moves to a similar scene with Talbot. Whenever Talbot feels his transformation coming on, he rips off his necktie—throughout the film, Chic is habitually fiddling with his own tie. He finally removes it, and is soon mistaken for the Wolf Man. At a costume ball, Chic even has a werewolf mask. Wilbur's costume for the ball has a Dracula-like cape, and in

a pivotal scene Dracula and Wilbur, both in capes, face off. Lugosi as his roughest and Costello with his hair slicked back never looked more alike. Both comedians do imitations of the monsters; in one scene Costello convulses the Monster that he is Dracula. The finale constantly cuts from Dracula fleeing the Wolf Man to Abbott & Costello fleeing the Monster. Both women in the film—and this is the only film in the series where women are more than victims—beget affection for Wilbur, and then are seduced by Dracula. Such parallels help the film overcome the basic incongruity of the characters—a problem that plagues all the farangy-meet-the-monsters movies (and certainly the later Abbott & Costello Meet Movies). In Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein the monsters and the comedians seem kindred souls, fellow outcasts from opposite ends of the social spectrum.

The Monster has more screen time in Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein than in the three previous films combined. Under Dracula's hypnotic control, the Monster can even speak again, though only to say "Yes, Master." Tragic but fitting that the best surrogate father to adopt the Monster would be Dracula, one of the most abusive and violating parent figures in literature. After *House of Dracula* the Wolf Man apparently resolved his father/son crisis and was ready to contribute some good to the world. Not so the Monster, fated to be forever exploited by his creator/keeper/master/parent. The Monster's last victim is Sandra Moray, his first woman victim since *Bride of Frankenstein* and his first victim at all since *Ghost of Frankenstein*. In the climax of Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein the Monster is fully revived once more. Dracula is off baiting the Wolf Man, and Sandra tries to control the Monster. He offhandedly tosses her out of a window.

The first "human brain" I ever saw was in a monster movie. I cannot recall if it was a Frankenstein film or some other mad doctor epic. Even at that tender age of five or so, I knew that all that is humanity, all that is individuality, was in that glob in the jar. Forty years ago, seeing one's first brain was quite a rite of passage. Not so now—"brains" are now commonly found at science museums, toy stores and the like. As I write this, Taco Bell is dispensing with its kid's meals "Charles the Brain Child," a toy based on the aptly named character from Saturday morning cartoons. But from 1931 until about 1980 most young people had the same introduction as I to that most mysterious of human organs. By the time school got around to teaching anything on the human brain, usually after 7th grade or so, my generation, like the generation before us, had received thorough instruction from Drs. Frankenstein, Waldman, Pretorius, Bohmer, Mannering, Niemann, Edelman, Moray et al.

Young people are often fascinated by what their upbringing ignores or avoids. Such taboo areas become persistent elements in horror stories. Let children's stories teach basic social behavior and values, and address that first fear, separation from the parent. When the children ask "but what if?," horror takes over to deal with (in no particular order): pain and death; physical and mental abnormality; racial, ethnic and religious tensions; and familial, sexual, reproductive and aging anxieties. Horror no longer has the monopoly it once had with these topics, but horror

stones handle these efficiently. Often the melodramatic plotlines of horror films reduce such diverse elements to simplistic questions of anatomy. The monsters look different to us, and under examination the doctors show they are different.

In the rite of passage of sitting through horror movies, we must not only survive the scary and shocking scenes, but also the clinical scenes of anatomical detail, complete with internal organs in horror as in life, if we turn away from the discomforting and unsettling we miss the best part of the story. As the doctor tools away on bats and pieces he has collected, some viewers are mesmerized, the rest have shut their eyes. In 1931, when Dr. Waldman showed us for the first time two human brains, soon to be stolen by deformed Fritz, enough of the audience was transfixed to convince Universal that a new vein of commercial potential and audience curiosity had been tapped.

Universal only brought to a wider audience a fascination that has long captivated academics, the potential "mad doctors" themselves. Le Musée de l'Homme in Paris has been preserving brains of the famous and infamous for many years. The University of Tokyo has been building its collection since 1913. When the Soviet Union collapsed, among its ruins was a vault containing the preserved, sectioned brains of Lenin and other notables. Stalin could not get Hitler's brain, but parts of the Fuhrer's skull were in that vault. Many universities have their own, more modest collections. At last accounting, Einstein's brain is in Kansas and John Kennedy's brain is still missing. Except for Lenin's (the contracted encephalitis after an assassin shot him in the head), all these brains are pretty much the same. The day when we can repeat Waldman's analysis and look at a brain and know anything about the character of the donor is very far off. The Frankenstein films teach as much—as the doctors understand much about the brain and nothing about the Monster.

The last writings of Henry Frankenstein summarize his outlook. In Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein, Henry's notebook, "The Secrets of Life and Death" again appears, and we briefly see on one of its pages:

All my research is based on the premise that all things, even thought, are material.

Perhaps one day Henry's premise will be proven correct. Perhaps as Carl Sagan ponders in *Broca's Brain*, as the distant future we will be able to "read" the convulsions on a brain and know every thought, every emotion, every impulse and reaction that it does or ever had. Until then, we can only look at a brain and wonder, or like Henry and his ilk be oblivious to the question at all. The prologue of *Frankenstein* tells us that Henry created the Monster "without reckoning upon God." Henry hardly shared his thoughts on God with us, but we know he never reckoned upon his own ignorance. Nor, on pain of death, did the many doctors that followed him. ■

Watch for Frank Dello Stritto's in-depth look at *The Phantom of the Opera* in the next issue of *Cult Movies Magazine*.

The Last Time I Saw Archie

By Ray Dennis Steckler

The last time I saw Arch Hall Sr. was in the late seventies. He was living off Catalina Island and invited me to come down and visit him at his home. About 71 or 72 at the time I guess, pretty much retired from the movie business, although he said he had dabbled in some documentaries in recent years. He had always been involved in real estate. It had been a while since I spent any time with him.

Before my visit I found a 16mm print of *The Sagebrush Kid Goes West*, made around 1940. Arch was in that film and he said he wanted to see it again. I suggested a swap for a print of his film *Wild Garts*, since I had never made a cent off that picture, my first directorial job.

It was a good evening, watching both these movies and catching up on things. Arch had just spoken to Richard Kiel, who had scored a hit as jaws in a James Bond film and they were talking about doing a sequel to *Eegah!* together, which would have nicely capitalized on his new found 007 stardom. Actually they went way back — Arch owned an apartment complex and Richard had lived there. Arch used to joke that he had cast Richard as *Eegah!* because Richard owed him six months back rent. (A very gentle man, Richard once showed great kindness to my daughter Laura at an autograph signing.)

The morning after our visit and screening, Arch



Left to right: Arch Hall, Virginia Broderick, Arch Hall Jr. and Ray Dennis Steckler

Hall Jr. called my house. "Dad just died," he said. His words still leave me in a state of shock when I recall them. Arch Sr. had been teaching a writing class at a school there. The talk with his students turned to his career and all his various accomplishments and Arch's last words to them were: "I'm invincible." Then he collapsed and died right there in the classroom.

I first met Arch Hall Sr. while I was working for Ralph Cushman, aka Rudolph Cusumano, director of *Secret File Hollywood* and *Wild Ones On Wheels*. We were shooting a scene for *Secret File* at Producer's Sound next to Hollywood Film Enterprises on Sunset Boulevard. I was the DP. Ralph was the one who introduced me to Arch. He had been an actor in one of my all time favorite Buster Crabbe westerns, *Border Badmen*. Arch had just made *The Chopper* with his son, musician Arch Hall Jr., and was planning to go into another movie about a prohibition agent, *Eegah!* with Richard Kiel as the loveick cowman.

He'd already assigned a DP to the film, but

wanted to know if I'd assist. It sounded good and even better when he said it would be made in Palm Springs, a nice change of pace for me from Hollywood. We made a deal for about 100 bucks a week and shortly thereafter we went to Palm Springs to shoot *Eegah!* The way Arch paid me would lead to some problems.

When I started the editing of *Eegah!* for him, he said he'd give me 50 bucks a week. It wasn't very much but I wanted to do some editing. It was a great chance to sit down and work with a movieola. Arch said payday would be Monday of the next week. So the next week I went in to get my 50 dollars. The next week payday wasn't Monday, it was Tuesday. The third week, payday wasn't Tuesday, it was Wednesday. The next week it was Thursday and the following week it was Friday. When I pointed out to Arch that he had managed to shift the schedule in a way that I would lose a week's pay, he just stared at me. Well, that was that. He still owes me 50 dollars.

Arch Jr. starred, of course, and Marilyn Manning, an absolute delight, played his girlfriend. Arch Sr. changed his name to William Watten so his on-screen name wouldn't conflict with his son's and he also produced under the name Nicholas Mennweather. We shot the film with short ends. For those unfamiliar with the term, short ends are unexpended pieces of film left over from previously shot movies. They're cheaper to buy than standard size reels. It's a lot of labor and you've constantly got your hands in the changing bag, removing exposed film from the camera and replacing it with fresh stock. Plenty of independent picture men back then made their films with short ends.

We finished *Eegah!*, which also marked my screen debut. It was neat to photograph myself — a locked shot — during the scene when *Eegah!* knocks me into the pool, although Arch cut a fourteen-second scene of me getting out of the pool. He was a pretty shrewd B-zovvie producer. He covered all the right elements of that time: rock and roll, dune buggies, a pretty girl in a



Marilyn Manning from *Eegah!*

looking, a caveman, great color. One technical problem was that the sound man had major troubles—the sound wouldn't hold synch—so the entire picture had to be dubbed. It actually improved *Eegah!*, giving a comic strip feel to the whole crazy show.

Fairway-International, Arch's company, did well with the picture. *Eegah!* was a success. So Arch said, "We gotta make another movie." And so, *Wild Guitar*. This time he offered me the directing job for 10 percent of the profits. That meant I had to direct the movie and wait down the line for my money, a little tough for a 21-year-old guy and a wife and a baby. What do you do? You take a chance.

Arch wanted *Wild Guitar* to be a serious movie. I felt that humor needed to be added. Not camp as they would call that brand of humor in the mid-sixties, just some comedy to lighten things up. I added a kidnapping sequence to it with three of my future Lemon Grove Kids. Later on, Arch took those scenes out in certain prints, because he felt the comedy detracted from what was supposed to be an overall dramatic picture. To me it was a Monogram kind of movie from beginning to end, although I tried to add some flavor with unusual camera work by Vilmos Zsigmond and Joe Moscatelli. In fact I've always considered that end sequence on the beach to be one of the best things we've ever put on the screen. What *Wild Guitar* really meant—that wild Elvis Presley ending.

The overwhelming feeling I got about Arch Hall during the making of *Eegah!* and *Wild Guitar* was that he was, being a father, living a second, younger life through his son. Now Arch came to Hollywood to be an actor and never got any leading roles. In producing *The Cheyenne*, *Eegah!* and *Wild Guitar* in a row, all featuring his son, Arch Sr. felt that he had created the steps toward making his son into a major star, or at least a successful teen idol. Personally I don't think Arch Jr. ever cared about the stardom thing at all. It was what his dad wanted for him. I think the sons might have gone on to a perfectly fine film career if he wanted to. He just didn't have the drive or ambition without his dad's guidance and control.

Today Arch Jr. flies for the Flying Tigers. He's been doing it for over 20 years. Just like his father, a pilot. I'm sure he's a happy man at this very moment. Personally, I never had a problem with Arch Jr. during any sequences at all. Of course he



Deadwood '76

got upset when his dad and I would go at it over how something should be done. He always would, naturally, defend his father's opinion in a second as any son would. My point of view has been that if you hire me as a director, let me direct or get rid of me. Which has happened to me a few times.

After *Wild Guitar*, our association faded. Arch and his Fairway-International decided to go with another filmmaker named James Landis, resulting in *The Sadist*, a very strong film. This teen psycho movie renamed Arch Jr. and Marilyn Maling. Vilmos did the photography on that one also. It turned out to be a very well-known movie and drew a strong reaction from the trades.

I went on to make *Incredibly Strange Creatures* which Fairway originally distributed. I was very upset when Arch threw it on as a second bill below *The Sadist*. His opinion was that his picture was better than mine. Of course disagreed, pointing out that a distributor should do his best for his clients, not leave them in the woods. We were getting \$25 per play with Arch's system and couldn't go on the hole like that!

We took the 25 prints that he had struck (at about \$1,000 per print) and started distributing it ourselves, which eventually led to the midnight shows. Creations would be the first and last film

that Arch ever released for me. So much of his world was concerned with his son's career. It was entirely natural, who do you work for in this world? Family. But he could have built Fairway into a much bigger company.

Then came *Deadwood '76*, a western starring Arch Sr. and Jr., with Landis and Vilmos again behind the camera. All the profits Arch had made from the other films were put into *Deadwood*, shot in Dakota. *Deadwood '76* never got off the ground with playdates. I'm the biggest western buff in the world, but even to me *Deadwood* was just a lifeless movie. It didn't have any of the flavor of Arch's earlier pictures. I don't know if it's on video today, but it had to have been a big money loser in the theaters. Today it's a forgotten and unseen film. Everybody makes one or two of those and unfortunately it was the last film Arch turned out.

Arch himself was given a kind of major studio immortality back in 1961. William Bowers, who was Arch's Air Force pal during the second World War, wrote a screenplay called *The Last Time I Saw Archie*. Bowers based his character on Arch Hall and caught all his character traits. Robert Mitchum played the lead, Archie Hall, and had Arch's style down pat—this seemingly lackadaisical, sleepy-eyed personality who always came out on top. So laid back, he was practically lying on the floor.

And Arch Hall always did come out on top in real life in everything. Jack Webb produced and directed this film. The film was in no way an autobiography, but the character was obviously supposed to be him. Arch never mentioned to his friends that Mitchum had played him on the big screen in a reasonably big film. I went to see the movie as a fan of Webb and Mitchum, and found out.

Arch opened doors for me and gave me opportunities. He gave me a chance to direct my first film. For that I'm grateful. We had our share of conflicts and disagreements, like anyone else. For the short time that we actually worked together, I think I did my best for him. Sure would like to do it again.

(Ray Dennis Steckler can be reached at Mascot Video, 2375 E. Tropicana Ave., Suite 2, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119. Phone 702-734-8555.) ■



Marilyn Maxwell and Arch Hall Jr. from *Eegah!*

Yoshio Irie Interview

by David Milner

Translation by Yoshihiko Shibata

Yoshio Irie took part in the designing and construction of the miniatures seen in *Godzilla — King of the Monsters* (1954), *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955), and all of the Toho Company Ltd.'s other early science-fiction movies. Mr. Irie also worked on miniatures seen in several of the studio's war films.

Cult Movies: In what year did you begin working for Toho?

Yoshio Irie: 1953. The first of the studio's productions I worked on was *Eagle of the Pacific* (1953). I built two aircraft carriers for it at one-tenth scale.

CM: What were the names of the aircraft carriers?

YI: The *Hiryu* and the *Akagi*. All of the real naval ships had been sunk or destroyed, so we had to build models in order to make *Eagle of the Pacific*.

CM: What materials did you use?

YI: The models were made with wood and then covered with tin plates.

CM: How long did it take you to construct the aircraft carrier models?

YI: We spent two months drawing the blueprints and three months building the models.

CM: Did you base the blueprints on real aircraft carriers?

YI: I worked with a very famous ship historian named Shozo Fu. He had blueprints of the two aircraft carriers, although they were basic ones.

Toho hired Mr. Fu, who'd served in the navy, as a consultant. The studio also hired many other consultants to work on its war films. They provided advice on equipment, uniforms, and so on. By the way, Mr. Fu died a few years ago.

CM: What movies did you work on after *Eagle of the Pacific*?

YI: *Forever — Rebel* (1954), *Godzilla — King of the Monsters* — all of the monster and war films.

CM: Were you a Toho employee?

YI: No. My contract came up for renewal every year.

CM: What was your title?

YI: Akira Watanabe was the art director, and I was the first assistant art director. Only the head of each department would be credited on screen, so my name never appeared. Only Mr. Watanabe's did. Toho's executives thought that crediting only department heads afforded them special status.

I remember that there were times when even some department heads weren't credited. For example, the sequence in Akira Kurosawa's *The Throne of Blood* (1957) in which the kensei needs to move was shot by Eiji Tsuburaya and his staff, but the on-screen credit read only "special effects department." (Mr. Tsuburaya directed the special effects for virtually all of Toho's earlier science fiction and war movies.)

CM: Were the production budgets for the war films you worked on very large?

YI: They were about the same as the production budgets for the monster movies. They had to be big because a large number of people had to be



Yoshio Irie

hired to work on the films and a large number of miniatures had to be built for them. In addition, only about one-third of the pyrotechnics would end up appearing on screen. So, they always cost a lot of money.

CM: How many people did Toho have working on miniatures?

YI: About 50. Some would be hired for a year at a time and others would be hired only for specific movies.

CM: What material was used to portray water in the shots of ships seen from the point of view of people flying in airplanes?

YI: Gelatin.

CM: Did the United States government object to the production of movies about World War II so soon after the end?

YI: We were not allowed to make any war films until the agreement ending the occupation of Japan was signed in 1951.

CM: How did you react when you heard that Toho was going to produce *Godzilla — King of the Monsters*?

YI: I was very skeptical about it at first. I couldn't imagine what it would be like.

CM: Was that how most of Toho's employees felt?

YI: We all had seen *King Kong* (1933), but *Godzilla — King of the Monsters* was going to feature a dinosaur-like monster instead of a giant gorilla. So, we had no idea what it would be like.

CM: How much time did you spend working on the movie?

YI: Pre-production lasted for only a short period of time. I don't think Toho's executives realized how time-consuming a process building all of the miniatures would be. We were given only three months to complete our work. We started in April and finished up in June.

The blueprints we had to work with were for Kachidoka Bridge and the Nichigyo Building, which was owned by Toho. The owners of all of

the other buildings we were planning to reproduce in miniature refused to let us use their blueprints because they didn't want their buildings to be destroyed by *Godzilla* on screen. So, we had several engineers measure the buildings in Gama and other sections of Tokyo. After we got the measurements from the engineers, we drew our own blueprints and constructed the miniatures.

It was very difficult to complete all of the work in only three months. We had to stay late almost every day.

CM: Did you use the same materials and methods that you had previously?

YI: When you're shooting a war film, all of the miniatures are destroyed with pyrotechnics, but when you're shooting a monster movie, many of them are destroyed by the person playing the monster. This means that some portions of the miniatures have to remain intact after they've been trampled on. In order to make sure that happens, you have to use different kinds of plaster and pre-cut the miniatures so they'll break the right way.

CM: I've heard that you had to rebuild the model of the Diet Building. Is that true?

YI: Yes. We did have to rebuild it. The *Godzilla* costume was very heavy and stiff, so Haruo Nakajima could barely lift his feet while he was in it. Because of that, Mr. Nakajima could not destroy the model the way Mr. Tsuburaya originally wanted. So, we had to rebuild it and shoot the scene over. (Mr. Nakajima plays *Godzilla* in the first 12 *Godzilla* films.)

CM: Were you surprised by the great success of *Godzilla — King of the Monsters*?

YI: I was very surprised by it.

CM: Why do you think the movie was so successful?

YI: It reminded people of the war. That was one reason. Another was the fact that it was seen as a film about fear, rather than a film about a giant monster. Finally, it was original. Nobody had ever seen anything like it before.

CM: How much time did you spend building the model of Osaka Castle used in the production of *Godzilla Raids Again*?

YI: Fifteen days. It was going to be destroyed by the monster actors, so we had to do very meticulous work.

CM: The model was very elaborate. Was it expensive to build?

YI: Very.

CM: I've heard that it had to be rebuilt. Is that true?

YI: Yes. The timing of the first take wasn't right. **CM:** Did you have to reconstruct miniatures used in the production of many of the other monster films on which you worked?

YI: Yes. The monster actors often would make a mistake during shooting. In addition, since the cinematographers were shooting at high speed, the cameras would sometimes jam. I remember that one time Tetsuo Arakawa became completely pale when he sat down to watch some film he'd shot and saw that there was nothing on it. (Mr. Arakawa worked on *The Mysterians* (1957), *War of the Gargantuas* (1966), and a number of Toho's other science fiction movies as a special effects cameraman before directing the special effects for *Sea of Godzilla* (1967), *Destroy All Monsters* (1968), and *Ygg — Monster From Space* (1970).)

CM: I've heard that you built Atragon. Is that

true? [Aragon is the flying submarine featured in *Atragon* (1963).]

YI: I only drew the blueprints I based them on drawings of the submarine by Shigeru Komatsuzaki. (Mr. Komatsuzaki drew the original design sketches for many of the miniatures seen in Toho's films.)

CM: Who actually constructed the model?

YI: Gunji Model Craft. Most of the time, Toho's own employees would build the miniatures, but some of the more complex miniatures were built by Gunji Model Craft.

CM: What materials were used to construct the model?

YI: The body was made of steel and the drill at the front was made of aluminum. Wood wouldn't have been strong enough.

CM: Did Gunji Model Craft make the models of structures such as Tokyo Tower and the Eiffel Tower?

YI: No. They were made by a company called Taida Warehouse.

CM: Did you just reuse the blueprints for models of buildings that you had constructed previously when you were called upon to make them again?

YI: Most of the movies I worked on were set in different cities, so I didn't have many opportunities to reuse my blueprints.

After monster films became popular, representatives from many cities asked Toho to set one in their city. So, we would have to go to Nagoya, Fukuoka and so on to take measurements.

CM: Did you construct the spaceships seen in

The Mysteries, Godzilla Vs. Monster Zero (1965), and so on?

YI: I drew the blueprints for most of them after receiving the original design sketches. However, I designed the little aircraft seen in *Godzilla* (1962) myself. Gunji Model Craft had to build it because the steel had to be hammered very meticulously. After *Godzilla* was completed, the model was used in the production of one of the Ultraman television series. (All of the series were produced by Tsuburaya Productions, Inc., which was founded by Mr. Tsuburaya.)

CM: Did you design any other spaceships or planes?

YI: Designing is a very time-consuming process. I was always too busy drawing blueprints and building miniatures.

CM: How much time did you usually spend drawing blueprints?

YI: About three months.

CM: How much time did you usually spend constructing miniatures?

YI: About a month and a half. We were always very rushed.

CM: Which of the science fiction films you worked on were most challenging for you?

YI: *The Mysteries*, *Battle in Outer Space*, and *Godzilla*. I did a lot of work for those movies.

CM: At what point did you begin to feel confident about working on monster films?

YI: We were still experimenting during the production of *Godzilla Roars Again*, but by the time production on *Kodas* got underway, we had enough experience to know what we were doing.

CM: What was Mr. Tsuburaya like?

YI: He introduced me to my wife. He acted as a go-between for us. I was the only member of his staff for whom he did that, so I felt very honored. (It is traditional in Japan for someone to act as a go-between for a prospective couple.)

Since Gunji Model Craft built some of the miniatures used in the production of Toho's movies, Mr. Tsuburaya and I would go to visit the company from time to time. That's how I got to know my wife.

I was the person Mr. Tsuburaya always blamed when something went wrong. He never blamed Mr. Watanabe! Mr. Tsuburaya had a great interest in aircraft. I did as well.

CM: Which of Toho's older science fiction films are your favorites?

YI: *The Mysteries*, *Battle in Outer Space*, and *Godzilla*. I like them better than the monster movies.

CM: What do you think of the war films?

YI: I wanted to be a naval officer when I was a boy, so I really enjoyed them.

CM: How do you think the more recent *Godzilla* movies compare to the earlier ones?

YI: The special effects are far more sophisticated, but the plots are very limited. All we see is monsters fighting with each other.

CM: How do you feel about Tristar Pictures producing a *Godzilla* film in the United States?

YI: I think the movie will be much more enjoyable than Toho's recent *Godzilla* films.

CM: Why is that?

YI: Hollywood has produced a lot of good movies that aren't serious dramas lately. ■

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Kenpachiro Satsuma Interview — Take Three

by David Milner

Translation by Yoshihiko Shibata

Kenpachiro Satsuma plays Godzilla in *Godzilla 1985* (1984), *Godzilla Vs. Biollante* (1989), *Godzilla Vs. Gidorah* (1991), *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* (1992), *Godzilla Vs. Mechagodzilla* (1993), *Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla* (1994), and *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* (1995). In addition, Mr. Satsumaplays Hedorah in *Godzilla Vs. The Sing Monster* (1971) and Gigan in both *Godzilla Vs. Gigan* (1972) and *Godzilla Vs. Megalon* (1975).

Cult Movies: How did you react when you found out that Godzilla was going to die in *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*?

Kenpachiro Satsuma: I saw very little of the first draft of the script while it was being written. That was unusual. I really saw the script only when the first draft was completed. I wondered why I wasn't being allowed to see the script. When I finally saw the first draft at the end of June, I learned that Godzilla was going to die (*Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* was written by Kazuki Omori. Mr. Omori also wrote *Godzilla Vs. Mothra*, and wrote and directed *Godzilla Vs. Biollante* and *Godzilla Vs. Gidorah*).

CM: Were you surprised?

KS: I wasn't. However, I was quite concerned with the manner in which Godzilla was going to die.

I was surprised that Godzilla was going to die on land instead of in the ocean, which was his cradle. I think it's natural for Godzilla to die because he is a living thing, but I envisioned his death differently.

My idea was based on the legend of the tomb of elephants. According to the legend, when an elephant begins to feel that he is going to die, he secretly goes to the tomb. I envisioned Godzilla returning to the South Pacific when he began to feel that his end was coming. There then would have been some implication that Godzilla had died.

CM: Why was the script hidden from you?

KS: It was kept under wraps because Toho didn't want any information about it to leak to the press. The producers knew that there were many media representatives approaching me for information. (The last six Godzilla films were co-produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka and Shogo Tomiyama. Mr. Tanaka produced virtually all of the other science fiction movies made by the Toho Company Ltd.)

CM: Was the Godzilla costume used in the production of *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* the same one that had been used in the production of *Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla*?

KS: Yes.

CM: Was working on *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* more challenging for you than working on the other recent Godzilla films?

KS: Yes. I had to wear an oxygen mask both in the water and on land because of the carbon monoxide. [Godzilla is exposed to a fatal dose of radiation at the beginning of *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. Smokey rises from his body throughout the movie.]

I filmed four times during the first day of filming. We were shooting the scene in which Godzilla emerges from the water as he approaches

Hong Kong. I wasn't worried about the carbon monoxide, so I wasn't wearing an oxygen mask.

We were shooting in water, so nobody could just run up to me when they saw me acting strangely. We were filming a long shot, so nobody was very close to me. The members of the staff didn't realize I'd fainted that first time until they started opening up the costume so I could get out.

CM: Was the mood on the set different from the mood on the set of the other recent Godzilla movies?

KS: Somewhat. We didn't express our feelings, but I sensed that there was a special feeling on the set.

CM: Did you try to do the best work you could since you knew that there were not going to be any



Kenpachiro Satsuma

other Godzilla films made for some time?

KS: Yes. I did. I think my performance as my best as Godzilla. The script called for Godzilla to be much more violent than usual. So, at first I tried to portray him as if he were on a rampage. However, Koichi Kawakita felt that Godzilla's behavior should still be somewhat subdued. [Mr. Kawakita directed the special effects for the last six Godzilla movies. He also directed the special effects for *Yamato Takeru* (1994), *Mothra* (1996), and a few other science fiction films.]

CM: Do you think that you continuously got better at playing Godzilla over the years?

KS: Yes. I think my performances did keep getting better. I also think that I managed to give Godzilla a distinct character. I'm very proud of that.

CM: What was working with Maruo Nakajima on *Godzilla Vs. The Sing Monster* and *Godzilla Vs. Gigan* like? (Mr. Nakajima plays Godzilla in the first 12 Godzilla movies. He also plays Rodan (1956), Varan — The Unbelievable (1958), and many of the other giant monster characters created by Toho.)

KS: I did not especially want to play Hedorah. I had a prejudice against actors who played giant monsters. About halfway through the production of *Godzilla Vs. The Sing Monster*, I realized that Mr. Nakajima was a monster not only inside a costume, but also outside of one! I was affected by his spirit. He was very proud of being a monster actor.

I soon began to have respect for monster acting. That's one of the reasons why I accepted the role of Gigan. Another was the heartwarming treatment I received from Teruyoshi Nakano. (Mr. Nakano directed the special effects for *Godzilla Vs. The Sing Monster*, *Godzilla Vs. Gigan*, and several other

Godzilla films.)

I remember that Mr. Nakajima and I went to cities such as Nagoya and Osaka to promote *Godzilla Vs. The Sing Monster*. Even outside of the costume, he was Godzilla! It was Godzilla at large! Outside, in the street—everywhere! Mr. Nakajima wasn't concerned about what people thought. I tried to restrain him. Hedorah tried to stop Godzilla's rampage—but he was a monster!

Mr. Nakajima had the great spirit of the older people in the movie industry. He began working in the industry during the 1940s. Whenever a young, inexperienced director would try to tell him what to do, Mr. Nakajima would reply, "Back off, you green boy!" He had that type of attitude.

CM: I know that *Giant Monster Palpsary* (1985) has been released on VHS tape, but I haven't been able to find a copy of it. Is it available in stores? (The movie features a mantarou-like monster played by Mr. Satsuma.)

KS: You have to send in money for a copy by mail. The tape isn't being sold in stores. That's one of the conditions under which it is being made available.

The copyright matter still had not been resolved less than a week ago. It was settled in only a few days.

CM: How did you become involved in the production of *Giant Monster Palpsary*?

KS: It was a co-production between the North Korean government and Toho.

CM: Did Toho help finance it?

KS: No. The North Korean government paid for it to be produced. Toho only arranged for some of its special effects staff members to go to North Korea. (Mr. Nakano and Mr. Eguchi were among those who went.)

CM: Why did the North Korean government want to produce a giant monster film?

KS: Jong-il Kim wanted to produce one. That's the only reason. (Mr. Kim's father was the head of the North Korean government at the time.)

CM: How much time did you spend in North Korea?

KS: Two months.

CM: What was working on the movie like?

KS: Although the North Korean members of the staff already had made a few war films, they'd never before worked on a monster movie. Their inexperience caused production to go very slowly.

CM: Were all of the members of the special effects staff Toho employees?

KS: Yes.

CM: Was the production budget very large?

KS: It was about four times larger than the average for a North Korean film.

CM: Was it difficult to work with people who spoke Korean instead of Japanese?

KS: Yes. Since Korea had been part of the Japanese empire at one time, older Koreans could speak Japanese. However, younger ones could not. So, we had four interpreters working with us. It took a large amount of time for the miniature buildings to be constructed because we always had to wait for the interpreters to translate our instructions. Shooting also took much longer than usual for that reason.

CM: Did you think the movie turned out well?

KS: There was a screening of it held at Toho's studios recently. The film wasn't bad. However, I

remember that I saw one very strange blank spot in it that lasted for a few seconds. I don't know why it was there. I saw the same spot when I saw the movie on VHS tape about a year ago. I don't know if the spot appears in the home video edition that's now being sent to the public.

CM: Why did it take so long for the film to be released in Japan?

KS: Jong-Il Kim did not succeed his father until he died last year. The succession became a political issue here in Japan. Many newspapers and television stations reported that the new North Korean dictator had made a monster movie with the assistance of Toho employees. Toho became very nervous about the matter. Many reporters asked me about my experiences in North Korea while Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla was in production. I had to try to keep what I said to a minimum because Toho was trying to keep Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla completely separated from Giant Monster Paiguary in people's minds.

CM: I've heard that Giant Monster Paiguary originally was going to be released in theaters. Is that true?

KS: The producer, Sang-Ok Shin, and a film distributor in Osaka made a deal to release Giant Monster Paiguary on home video. Soon after they made the deal, a committee representing North Koreans living in Japan claimed rights to the movie. So, the distributor agreed to allow the committee to show it in some theaters before it was released on home video. Eventually, the theatrical release was cancelled, and the distributor backed out of the deal. Some time after that happened, the company that is now distributing the film on home video reached an agreement with Mr. Shin.

CM: How much time did you spend working on Yamato Takeru (1994)? (It is a period movie that features several different giant monsters.)

KS: Toho spent three months shooting the film. I spent about a month and a half working on it.

CM: What was playing the eight-headed snake of Yamato like?

KS: I didn't enjoy it. I couldn't give a performance. Anybody could have done the job.

CM: I've heard that you had to use a walkie-talkie to communicate with Mr. Kawakita while you were made the costume. Is that true?

KS: The third assistant special effects director and I used walkie-talkies to communicate with each other. He was in charge of the eight-headed snake of Yamato.

CM: Are you happy with the way Yamato Takeru turned out?

KS: No. The standard footage is okay by itself, and the special effects footage is okay by itself, but I don't think the continuity between the two is very good.

I do think the continuity between the standard and special effects footage in Godzilla Vs. Destroyer is good. That's one of the reasons why I like the movie so much.

CM: Was Yamato Takeru successful?

KS: No.

CM: Has Toho decided not to produce any sequels to it? (The film was intended to be part of a trilogy.)

KS: I don't think that any sequels will be made. CM: Which of the Godzilla movies you've worked on are your favorites?

KS: I think I did my best work on Godzilla Vs. Destroyer. It's the nature of actors to pay attention

to their own performances, rather than entire films. That's why I also especially like the first battle in Godzilla Vs. Destroyer and the final battle in Godzilla Vs. Mothra.

CM: You mentioned that shooting Godzilla Vs. Destroyer was very difficult for you at first. Was working on any of the other movies in which you play Godzilla especially difficult for you?

KS: The most difficult scene for me to shoot was the one in which Godzilla comes out of an erupting volcano in Godzilla Vs. Mothra. The scene was shot at night. We didn't shoot it during the day and use a filter to make it seem as if the scene were taking place at night. Many bright lights, gasoline, gun powder, and napalm were used. I had to climb up the inside of the volcano, which was very steep. Pyrotechnics were going off everywhere. There were cables and ropes everywhere. A moment after each explosion that took place in front of me, some staff member would have to pull the shell out of the way so I wouldn't step on it. Fortunately, the first take turned out well.

CM: Have you decided to retire from playing Godzilla?

KS: I'm dead. I'll come back only if I see that the person who is playing Godzilla when production on the series is resumed sometime at the beginning of the next century isn't doing a good job. I began to feel that it was time for me to retire at the end of production on Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla. I noticed that I was beginning to lack the three powers needed to play Godzilla. My physical power was diminishing because of my age, and my spiritual and performance powers were diminishing because of budgetary constraints and interpersonal problems. It was difficult for me to approach my work with enthusiasm and energy. It didn't matter how much kendo I did. (Kendo is one of the martial arts.)

CM: Do you think that the decision to put the Godzilla series on hiatus for a number of years was a good one?

KS: The decision to stop production on the series was made because Toho's Godzilla was going to be released soon.

CM: Do you think that it would have been a good idea to put the series on hiatus anyway?

KS: Yes. I remember that during a conversation I had with Mr. Kawakita at the end of production on Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla, I said to him, "I think it would be good for us to stop soon," and he agreed with me.

CM: How do you think the films in which you play Godzilla compare to the earlier Godzilla movies?

KS: The special effects are more sophisticated. The materials and techniques used to construct the monster costumes and miniature sets have improved, and we now use computer graphics. However, the earlier Godzilla films are much more profound. I think the reason for this is the fact that the people who worked on them experienced World War II firsthand. Shunichi Sekizawa served in the South Pacific, and Mr. Honda was a prisoner of war in China for quite some time. (Mr. Sekizawa wrote the screenplay for Varus — The Unhumble, Godzilla Vs. Giger, and many of Toho's other science fiction movies.) The earlier films also are more detailed. For example, there are more reaction shots in them. The expressions on people's faces are shown more often, and the effects of the

monsters' actions are shown more often. On the other hand, the newer movies are more contemporary in that they address current issues such as bio-technology and environmental destruction. The earlier films didn't do that as much.

CM: What was working with Hurricane Ryu like? (He plays Chidori in Godzilla Vs. Gishiki, Betta in Godzilla Vs. Mothra, Baby Godzilla in Godzilla Vs. MechaGodzilla, the Kumaas god in Yamato Takeru, and Godzilla Junior in Godzilla Vs. Destroyer.)

KS: He hasn't quite mastered playing monsters yet. His fighting spirit is good, but he should think more before doing what Mr. Kawakita asks him to do. A monster actor has to prepare for shooting. After Godzilla Junior runs above the water near Omazaki Beach, a strong wind comes up behind him. Hurricane Ryu was not prepared for that, and so he lost his footing. The intentions of the staff members don't matter. All that matters is the final footage. So, I always try to think backwards from the final footage to the beginning of filming when preparing to shoot a scene.

CM: What was working with Waiwara Fukuda like? (Mr. Fukuda plays MechaGodzilla, the battle god of outer space in Yamato Takeru, and Mobile Operation Godzilla Expert Robot Aero-Type (MOGERA) in Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla.)

KS: He's in very good shape and has good sense. However, he doesn't understand the difference between working on a movie and appearing in an exhibition at a show or a convention. You have to pay attention to the continuity when you're working on a film. It's not just a matter of shooting one isolated scene after another. Mr. Fukuda begins acting right at the moment the director yells, "Action!" and stops at the moment the director yells, "Cut!" It's okay to work that way when you are appearing in an exhibition and just moving from one pose to the next, but that's not the way you should work when you are shooting a movie. You have to begin acting before the camera rolls and continue acting after it stops. If Mr. Fukuda began to understand this, I think he would be a great monster actor.

CM: What was working with Ryo Hanryu like? (Mr. Hanryu plays Space Godzilla and Destroyer.)

KS: He is very earnest and straightforward. He certainly learned quickly. I think he should be the next person to play Godzilla.

CM: What are your plans for the future?

KS: I'll be making many public appearances. Foreexample, I'm going to give a speech in Nishika on Youth Day (Youth Day is January 15th).

I recently gave a speech at the elementary school I attended. This school is in the town of Takano, which is in the Izumi district of Kyushu. I was supposed to speak only to the school children, but their parents and grand parents came to hear me as well. It was a very heartwarming experience. I'm currently working on a book that will be published by the Kindai Yumei Company. I haven't chosen a title yet, but the book will be about Godzilla-do, which really isn't all that different from some aspects of kendo and judo. I hope to get a lot of offers to work on period films.

CM: What advice would you offer to the next person who plays Godzilla?

KS: Be Godzilla. Don't do anything else. Write books about playing Godzilla, talk to reporters about playing Godzilla, but don't do anything else. Just be Godzilla. ■

Stuff To Read



The King of Comedy: The Life and Art of Jerry Lewis

Jerry Lewis — there seems to be no middle ground, you either love the spastic "Kid" of the Martin & Lewis movies, his sentimental, undeniably insensitive safe films, or you're appalled — yet strangely awed — by his seemingly endless well of self-indulgence, his naked, self-serving and very public self-analysis, his tacky if mesmerizing talk-show. And, of course, his perplexing isolation by the French (by both critics and the public) has been an endless, steady source of sure-fire stand-up material.

Lewis' life and art have been chronicled with amazing detail and thoughtful analysis in *Steven Lewis's The King of Comedy*. Thoroughly-researched and vividly written, it's easily the best book on film comedy since *Looney Rubeck's Laurel and Hardy: The Magic Behind the Movies* (Da Capo Press, 1987). Very richly documented Lewis' rise from Catholic orphan to genuine cultural phenomenon (the town's rush of screaming fans would be eclipsed only by Elvis and The Beatles), from the disintegration of the team to Lewis's conquest of all entertainment media, through the inevitable decline and eventual realization that even mainstream Broadway star.

"I'm an American icon," Lewis says, and Lewis's book most definitely affirms it. The author convincingly argues that Lewis' work and real-life excesses and frustrations encapsulate the postwar American scene, particularly the postwar American male psyche taken to its ultimate extreme. Martin and Lewis' bawdy, take-no-prisoners comedy came to symbolize the American spirit in the years immediately following World War II, but only solo films were increasingly personal, introspective and self-consciously arty, the late-60s saw him rejected by — and playing blame at — a younger, hipper generation (indeed, his popularity was briefly challenged by rock'n'roll and Gary, while as other went to Vietnam, returning with heavy emotional scars) and Lewis himself became increasingly lost, desperately trying to reduce his glory days, while his world collapsed around him.

Lewis's story is therefore, in a sense, America's. It's also a highly interesting, dramatic work. The break-up with Dean Martin has never been told in such impartial detail and when it finally happens, the reader is amazed by the emotional toll the break endured during their final years together. Lewis' personal excesses will certainly disturb the reader the more of taxidermy, the bowls of gold tricklets — always adorned with Lewis's name or likeness — given away to friends and strangers alike, the frequent vomiting. Lewis the filmmaker was no different but, seemingly, his intense devotion to his craft (and his intensely devoted) show through, his pioneering development of the Video Arise, permitting filmmakers to instantly review an approximation of every shot, his innovative set design for *The Ladies Man* (1961), his undoubted but often ingenuously used use of purely cinematic humor, proving the way for such Lewis admirers as Woody Allen, Steve Martin, and Robin Williams — and such pale imitators as Jim Carrey.

Equal weight is given to such lesser-known, though infamous Lewis like his disastrous ABC variety series, his unsuccessful chain of Jerry Lewis Casinos, his extraordinary depiction of a reversal of *Hellzapoppo*.

and, most intriguing of all, his completed but never released intoxication soap drama, *The Day The Clown Cried* (1970). Even France's love affair with Lewis is analyzed and actually begins to make sense in Lewis's belated films.

Off course, Lewis comes off as a vulgar, acerbic, selfish pig, even Hyde than Jekyll (appropriately, the dual jacket neatly divides his face in two: one-half in clownface, the other bleary-eyed with trademark oily hair). Much of the reader's negative opinion of Lewis, however, is shaped by Lewis himself via virulent, even appalling quotes from the press-baiting comedian. Levy, while never condoning Lewis's frequently observed behavior, clearly admires Lewis the artist and innovator, even like James Newhall and Ted Okuda's *The Jerry Lewis Films* makes the case for such much-maligned works as *The Patsy* (1994) and *Which Way To The Front* (1993).



After Lewis's brilliant turn as Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (1983), Levy's book seems to run through the late '60s and early '70s, lacking the depth of the rest of the book, and some of Lewis's lesser but starring films (such as Frank Tashlin's *It's Only Money*), are barely mentioned at all, but these are minor complaints (the Nelson/Okuda book helpfully fills in the few gaps).

Levy draws on an impressive list of resources, while relaying claims made by others, including material in Lewis's and even Pat's own autobiographies. Levy himself interviewed Lewis a few times before the occasion characteristically flew into a rage, apparently after it became clear the book would be something less than a whitewash. Levy's painful encounters with Lewis comprise the book's epilogue. "Irrationally, I think Jerry and I were both well-served by his outburst and subsequent rejection of me and my work," Levy writes. "He was able to avoid what I'm sure he was taken to be a gross betrayal and distortion. And I was able to write the most truthful account of his life that I could."

And so he has.

Reviewed by Stuart Galloway IV

Poverty Row Studios, 1929-1940

By Michael R. Pitts 542 pages, \$75 From McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28650

Instead of reviewing this book, let's instead examine how To Write A Book One, Jack a topic — in this case, minor movie companies of the 1920s '30s, go to a book like *The American Film Institute Catalog 1931-1940* and copy out their lists of films made by each studio (Chesterfield, Mopac, Tiffany, etc.) There, look at individual synopses for each picture in *The AFI Catalog*, *Variety* or *The Motion Picture Guide* and re-type all those Yols — *hah*.

Now — this is a step I suspect most "writers" and — ask yourself — three questions: One, what satisfaction do you derive from re-copying (i.e., stealing) the research work of previous writers? Two, what can only do you think you've accomplished? And three, why in the world should film fans buy books compiled by people like you (most of the insignificant references books that

you tediously and painstakingly copied your book out of I would get to more creative play out of compiling a book like this than I'd get out of working the Xerox machine at Kinko's (out of the same thing, actually).

Michael R. Pitts, whose ghastly book *Harrow Film Stars* began in my memory like a hole of random snarl longer in one's taste buds, apparently wears a horde of empty copiers and wants you to pay \$75 to partake of the fruits of his senseless labors. Gentle reader, send the money you would have wasted on *Poverty Row Studios* and other, smaller see-killers, and soon you'll have enough to buy one of the aforementioned reference sets, the product of real work by real writers. Thus you'll never waste or send a book like this one again.

See you at Kinko's, Mr. Pitts.

Reviewed by Ken Maltbald

It Came From Weaver Five

\$88.92, hardcover, 396 pp., illustrated, filmography, index, McFarland & Co. (phone orders 1-800-253-21870)

I think only movie buffs should be allowed to interview actors, directors, writers and crew members who contributed to the making of a motion picture, since they ask the questions most readers want answered. Most "entertainment reporters" (with the exception of Leonard Maltin) are too full of themselves, wanting to prove to readers that they know more than the person they are interviewing. Happily, Tom Weaver, a dyed-in-the-wool film buff, knows and asks the questions fans want to have answered. And he's been asking those questions for many years, getting them in various texts for general and future film buffs to consume and for bottom-feeding, plagiarizing writers (you know who you are!) to claim the interviews as their own. Weaver's latest effort proves that he still has what it takes to ask the right questions, avoiding the psycho babble, or the "this is what your character or movie was trying to say" routine, in which many other writers seem to take pleasure.

It Came From Weaver Five, the new book by Tom, tracks down many personalities that worked in the various horror and science fiction films from the 1930s to the late 1960s. Because of his engaging manner, he solicits frank and interesting responses, giving the reader the feeling of sitting down with two old friends who are recounting days gone by. For example, Frank Caglin, Jr. relates how he was packed for the serial *Captain Marvel*, and, in this day, does not have an axe to grind about only being remembered for that one famous role. Michael Pitts, another refreshing voice from the past, recounts his early days in the Australian film industry, working with Karlial and Leighton in *The Strange Door*, all the while displaying a grace that many contemporary actors of his day still maintain (it's shame many current-day "actors" do not have the same professional attitude).

Glenn Perkins, who appeared in 1,600+ movies and TV shows as a stuntman, recounts his work on such films as *King Kong*, *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man* and *Teen-Age Monster*. Interestingly, Perkins says if he had it all to do over again, he'd have been a commercial instead of doing stunts. He also relates that since his retirement in 1972, more stunt performers have been hurt on motion pictures than during his entire career. Other interviews include director Robert Wise, Charlotte Austin, Les Baxter, Moe Corder, Kathleen Crowley, Michael Fox, Dolores Fuller, Sam Sheppard, and more. For those who cannot get enough of Ed Wood, there is a chapter soliciting his info from director.

I wish Weaver would think about branching out and conducting interesting people who did not necessarily appear in horror or sci-fi. This is merely a suggestion, made purely because he's so good at getting individuals to open up. Imagine the treasure trove of stories he could uncover from many other film luminaries!

Reviewed by Michael F. Blake

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